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ONE MIGHTY LEAP, A BENDING OF THE RIDER'S BODY, AND THE GALLANT ANIMAL CAME DOWN SAFE
WITHIN THE INCLOSURE.



Death Trailer,

THE CHIEF OF SCOUTS;

OR,
Life and Love in a Frontier Fort.

BY HON. WM. F. CODY,
(BUFFALO BILL.)

CHAPTER I.

THE BANDIT'S DOOM.

MINGLING with the rumbling of wheels and the rattling of hoofs upon the stony road, came the clear notes of a bugle, piercing the deepest recesses of the chaparrals, and floating far off over the prairie until the sound died away upon the evening air.

Suddenly out of a dense piece of timber dashed a horseman, well-mounted, and wearing the uniform of an officer of cavalry in the United States army.

At his lips he held the silver bugle whose soft notes rose and fell sweetly upon the wind as he rode along.

Behind him came four dragoons, riding in twos, and then appeared an ambulance, drawn by four light mules; and bringing up the rear were two negro servants, mounted, and each

leading a caparisoned steed, one of them bearing a lady's saddle.

At a rapid trot the cavalcade dashed along until it drew near a small copse of timber, and here the young bugler drew rein, as if for a halt for the night, for the sun was upon the western horizon.

"Here is the very spot, uncle," cried the young officer, taking the bugle from his lips and calling back to the occupants of the ambulance.

But those were the last words he ever spoke, for a flash and report followed, and from the covert of the timber came a sharp report and whir of a bullet.

The silver bugle dropped from the hand, a choking cry came to the lips, and the young horseman fell with a heavy thud to the ground.

For an instant no sound was heard, no word was spoken. The four dragoons, the ambulance, the servants with the led horses, all came to a sudden halt; they seemed paralyzed by what they had seen.

Then from the ambulance came a deep, stern voice:

"Men, form here until I mount. Bring my horse, Tony."

The four dragoons formed in front of the ambulance, and the frightened negro, called Tony, led his master's horse alongside the vehicle, from which sprang a tall form, clad in a colonel's uniform, and with sword and revolver in hand.

In an instant he was in the saddle, his face pale and stern, as he gave the order:

"Follow me, men!"

As he spurred toward the chaparral, from out of its covert came a loud cry:

"Halt!"

Instinctively the officers and troopers drew rein, and the voice continued:

"If you come on you are dead men. I have five to one against you, and yonder dead lieu-

tenant proves that we mean business. You are in my power."

"Who, and what are you?" called out the officer.

"We belong to Cortina's band, and we seek you, Colonel Hugh Decatur—you and yours," answered the voice from the chaparral.

"Why do you waylay me on Texan soil, and what would you with me?" sternly asked the American colonel, his sword still held firmly in hand.

"We have not forgotten the half-score of our band whom you hung, dog of an Americano," fiercely returned the voice.

"I did with them as I will with any other of your thieving, murdering band that fall into my hands—as I will do with you, if you do not prove the stronger," said the colonel, in a tone that proved he meant what he said.

"Ha, ha, colonel! But, as I said before, we are five to one. See here!"

As the man spoke he stepped out from the chaparral, and from its dark foliage followed more than a score of wild-looking men.

One glance at them and Colonel Decatur saw that the man had spoken the truth; they were indeed the followers of the Mexican guerrilla chief, Cortina.

But, outnumbered as he was, he had no idea of tamely submitting. There was too much at stake, and he glanced nervously into the ambulance.

His gaze rested upon two persons within—a negress with wild, staring eyes, and a maiden of rare loveliness—a mere child-woman of eighteen, with a wealth of golden hair, large, dreamy blue eyes, and a form of perfection and grace.

She wore a slouch hat, encircled by a silver cord, a dark blue dress, trimmed with silver braid, and gauntlet gloves.

But her beautiful face was pale now, and the lips parted with the words: "Oh, Heaven, have mercy upon us!"

"You hold the winning hand, perhaps, Sir Robber; but not without a struggle that will send a number of your cutthroat band to the devil, so you had better compromise. What terms do you want?"

"My terms are easily made known, colonel. Your men are to be shot, your negroes held as prizes, you are to be hung to revenge our dead comrades, and—"

"And what, sir?" asked Colonel Decatur, in his deep, stern tones, while an agony of dread clutched at his heart.

"And the fair senorita, your daughter, will have to return with us to Mexico."

"Never! dog of a Mexican—never shall you lay your hand on her until I am dead, and then she is a Decatur, and will die by her own hand rather than be polluted by the touch of such as you. Men, follow me!"

Loud rung out the order, and driving his spurs into his steed the colonel rushed upon his foes, followed by his four dragoons.

There followed a few rapid shots, the yells of the surprised Mexicans, a trampling of hoofs, a cloud of dust and smoke commingling, and the unequal combat was begun.

"Hold! on your lives, hold!"

Above the din of the struggle arose the ringing cry—an order in a strange voice, and from the lips of a horseman who suddenly dashed upon the scene.

At once there was silence, and the smoke and dust drifted away on the wind.

A strange scene was revealed. The edge of the chaparral covered the bandits, crouching down for shelter, and the ground was dotted with several dead forms, recognizable as Mexicans.

Without the timber lay a dead horse and rider—a dragoon, and at the side of their gallant colonel were the remaining troopers, endeavoring to cut their way into the chaparral.

In the opening, in full view of the ambulance, the soldiers and the robbers, was a horseman.

He was a young man, dark-faced, handsome, and with flashing black eyes, while his white teeth glittered beneath the dark mustache, and his left hand stroked calmly his long beard.

He was attired in the picturesque Mexican uniform, and was superbly mounted upon a black mustang, wearing the silver-bespangled saddle and bridle of Mexico.

"Mercado, what means this outrage?" he said, in tones of anger, and speaking in Spanish.

The Mexican who had held the conversation with Colonel Decatur stepped from the chaparral, and replied with respect:

"It means, senor, that I learned that Colonel Decatur, who you remember executed our comrades, was going from the fort to take command in the northern country, and I determined to waylay and capture him."

"I left you to guard the crossing of the Rio Grande, sir—not to cross it and raid upon Texans. Nay, more; I forbade you to cross the river."

"Yes, senor; but when such a prize was at stake as this American colonel and his beautiful daughter, I thought I might venture to disobey your orders."

The young officer turned quickly, and beheld for the first time the vision of loveliness in the ambulance.

Raising his broad *sombrero*, he bent low over his saddle-bow, and then for an instant, while a strange look rested upon his face, he allowed his eyes to meet the earnest gaze of Helen.

From the daughter's face he turned his eyes upon Colonel Decatur, and a sigh escaped his lips and his look softened into sadness.

But, quickly, the fire came back to his eyes, and in his stern tones he said:

"Mercado, expecting you were up to some devilry, I took your trail, as soon as I returned from the city and learned you had crossed into Texas. Thank the Virgin I arrived in time to prevent further bloodshed. Now, senor, you know how I punish those who disobey."

"Mercy, Captain Martino! mercy!" cried the Mexican.

"Pedro, come here," was the reply of the young horseman, and a swarthy-faced half-reed advanced to his side.

Between the two there followed a short conversation, and the face of the Mexican captain darkened, as he said:

"Mercado, you have signed your death-warrant by this act. In ten minutes you die. Seize and bind him, men!"

"Ivan Martino, would you kill me?" shrieked the miserable wretch, as his comrades seized him. But he received no answer, as his leader turned to Colonel Decatur, and said, politely:

"I regret this delay, senor. You are free to go on your way. Though we have been for years enemies, I never make war upon an unprotected foe."

"Senor, did that man call you right in addressing you as Captain Ivan Martino?" asked Colonel Decatur, earnestly.

"He did, senor. I am Ivan Martino, the commander of Cortina's escort."

"Report has said many cruel things of you, captain, which I could hardly believe, for you seem to be too brave a man to be wholly wicked. Now I know you have been done injustice to, and from my heart I thank you for all that you have done for me and mine. A dog's death threatened me, and a worse fate would have befallen my daughter, had yonder villain carried out his design. See, he first shot down my nephew and aid, Lieutenant Decatur. Poor boy, he little dreamed what a dread fate awaited him."

The young Mexican shuddered. Strange, for one as used to scenes of desperate carnage as he was; but his face turned a shade paler, and his eyes again rested upon Helen.

"Come, senor, my daughter would thank you. Helen, this gentleman is Captain Martino."

"Were he Cortina himself, father, we owe him our lives. Senor, I am most grateful, and I can never forget you," and Helen held forth her hand.

"I fear evil rumor, ever floating around, will keep me in your remembrance, senorita, for I am not considered a saint on the border; but I will hope that you may think me less black than I am painted," said Martino, sadly.

"I will think only of your goodness to my father and myself. Poor cousin Harry, I wish you had been in time to save him," and the tears dimmed her beautiful eyes.

"Would that I had, senorita; but some must suffer in this world, and it was his unlucky fate. Now I will say *adios*, and should you ever fall in with any of Cortina's men again this will protect you."

"It is not likely that I will, as my father is now on his way to take command of a fort in Nebraska."

"Then wear this as a *souvenir* of the donor."

As the young Mexican spoke he took from around his neck a heavy gold chain, to which was attached a heavy star of solid metal, studded with a circle of diamonds upon one side and of rubies upon the other—a most costly and beautiful trinket.

Ere Helen could resist, he dropped it into her lap, raised his *sombrero* and wheeled away from the ambulance.

"Senor Colonel, this will doubtless be your camping-place for the night, so I will leave you as soon as I have had Mercado executed. This is not a safe place, you know, for Cortina's men."

"No; a company of United States cavalry may come along at any moment."

"In that case I will have a hot ride of it back to the Rio Grande. Pedro!"

"Senor!"

"Detail five men to fire upon Mercado."

"Yes, senor."

"You really intend to execute him, then?" asked Colonel Decatur, in some surprise.

"Of course. We have rough men to deal with, colonel. He disobeyed me, and he must die!"

"Mercy, senor, oh, mercy!" cried Mercado, overhearing the words of his captain.

"You plead in vain, Mercado. You must die!"

"It seems terrible, sir, to kill him for mere disobedience," said Colonel Decatur, his humanity getting the best of him and prompting him to plead for a man who a short while before would have hung him without mercy.

"You have a kind heart, Colonel Decatur, and I honor you for it; but Mercado must die. Are the men ready, Pedro?"

"Yes, senor."

"*Adios*, senor colonel! *Adios*, senorita!" and raising his *sombrero*, the young Mexican captain rode away, followed by his men, leading their horses, and bearing in their midst the wretched prisoner.

Like grim specters they disappeared in the gathering gloom of night, and all watched them in silence.

Then a bright flash lit up the prairie, revealing for an instant a group of forms, and one apart from the others. A shriek followed, drowned by the rattle of fire-arms, and then there was silence once more.

"Come, boys, darkness is upon us and we must go into camp, and then we have a sad duty to perform," cried Colonel Decatur, and while the troopers set to work building a fire, the negroes looked after the horses and prepared for the evening meal.

Then followed the burial of the dead, and many tears fell into the new-made grave of poor Henry Decatur, for the young officer was greatly beloved by all.

And few slept that night, for they had escaped from a deadly danger, and in the edge of the chaparral rested forever their comrades, whose fate had been so nearly their own.

With the first glimmer of light the little camp was astir, and after an early breakfast the party were again on the march.

As they moved off across the prairie they frightened off a pack of coyotes, grouped around a dark object—it was the body of Mercado, the Mexican.

Ivan Martino had kept his word.

CHAPTER II.

THE SELF-EXILE.

GLYNDON CASTLE was one of the grandest old houses in England, and the earl, its master, one of the proudest nobles in all of Great Britain.

In lazy luxury he dwelt upon his grand domain, a widower, and with but one son, a young man, at the time he is presented to the reader, of but twenty years of age.

Lord Glyndon was still young, comparatively speaking; yet he lived away from the cities as much as he could, and when not traveling over foreign lands with his son, passed his days at the castle, where, under a competent tutor, the young noble and heir could glean knowledge from books.

Though Paul did not neglect his studies, he yet preferred outdoor sports, and at eighteen years of age was the most daring rider, the best shot, and most thorough sailor in the county and along the coast, while his big heart, genial manners and handsome face made him beloved by all who knew him.

His father watched him carefully, and fearful that he would, upon coming of age, begin a life of reckless dissipation, he was determined to see him settled by the time he reached his twenty-first year, and at once set about looking up a wife for his son.

The right maiden was soon found—a fair young girl of eighteen—a beauty, an heiress, and the daughter of an earl, the boyhood friend of Lord Glyndon.

They met, the two fathers, in London, talked over the matter, and it was agreed between them that Earl Dorcas should visit Glyndon Castle, bringing his daughter Leonore with him.

The guests arrived promptly at the expected hour, and Lord Glyndon greeted them warmly, but with some impatience said:

"My son is just now away; he went this morning to a fox-hunt, the rascal, although I told him you were coming; but he said he would return in time—Ah! here he comes now. Run, boys, and open the gate."

"Great God! can he intend taking that gate?" cried Earl Dorcas, and Leonore turned pale as she beheld a horseman, splendidly mounted, and seated well in saddle, coming at full speed toward the gate, which, surmounted by an arch, was the entrance to the immediate grounds surrounding the castle.

The servants, at sight of their young master coming on at full speed, came to a sudden halt; they could never reach the gate before he did.

"The boy is mad. He will break his neck. Hold, Paul! For the love of God! draw rein!" shouted Lord Glyndon, in dismay.

But, unhearing, or if hearing, unheeding, the young noble came on like the wind.

Then he was seen to settle himself well in the saddle—a cry to his horse was heard, and he went straight at the gate.

One mighty leap, a bending of the rider's body, to avoid the arch above, a single instant poised in air, and the gallant animal came down safe within the inclosure, while a cry of admiration burst from all who witnessed the daring feat.

The next instant Paul Glyndon sprung from his steed, ascended the broad stone stairway, and greeted Earl Dorcas, whom he had before met, and bent low before Leonore.

He was a splendid specimen of youthful manhood—six feet in height, broad-shouldered, and dressed in hunting suit and top-boots.

His face was bold, generous and handsome, and his eyes fearless and full of fire, while his manners were courtly, and perhaps a little gay.

"A better leap I never saw, Sir Paul; did you, Leonore?" said Earl Dorcas, in admiration.

"No, father; it was a superb feat of horsemanship, yet I fear reckless."

"Perhaps so, Lady Leonore; but one does not know what horseflesh can do until he puts it to the test. But, father, have you forgotten that the earl and Lady Leonore have not yet entered the house?"

Recalled to his duty as host, which in his fear for his son he had temporarily forgotten, Lord Glyndon made amends, and ere long the party of four were seated around the dinner-table, where Paul soon mentally pronounced Leonore a splendid girl, while he certainly won her admiration.

That plot of the two parents seemed to work well, in the week that Earl Dorcas and his daughter were guests at Castle Glyndon, and there seemed no obstacle in the way to Leonore's becoming the wife of Sir Paul.

At length the father and daughter departed, and Lord Glyndon promised that he and Paul should return the visit soon, and the two old gentlemen laughed in their sleeves at the success of their plan.

That night Lord Glyndon and Sir Paul were seated together in the library, and after clearing his throat several times, the father said to the son:

"How do you like the Lady Leonore, Paul?"

"She's a splendid girl, sir."

"Would make some good man a good wife, eh?"

"Indeed she would, sir."

"Lucky dog—she is to be your wife."

"Sir?"

"She is to be your wife, you sly fellow. We planned it all together."

"Who are we, sir?"

"Why, old Dorcas and myself. He thinks you a splendid fellow—that leap over the gate did the work with him, you know—and as for Leonore, she loved you at sight."

"Did she say so, sir?"

"No; I saw it in her every act and look."

"Father, you are mistaken; the Lady Leonore does not love me any more than I love her."

Lord Glyndon turned and looked at Paul as though he believed he had suddenly gone mad; then he said:

"Well, what has love got to do with it? Love is all bosh—she is to be your wife."

"Never, father."

Lord Glyndon was on his feet in an instant—his face very angry.

"What do you mean, sir?"

"Simply what I say, sir; the Lady Leonore will never be my wife."

"Boy, you are mad. I intend that she shall be."

"You have an iron will, I know, father; but I have one of steel. I swear it; I shall never marry the Lady Leonore."

"What have you against her?"

"Nothing. She is all that is good and beautiful."

"Then you shall marry her, or—"

"Or what, father?"

"Or forever leave my house; you shall be no son of mine, sir."

"Father, would you let a woman I have known but a week come between you and me?" sadly said the son.

"Yes, if you disobey me in this which I have set my heart upon. You must promise me tomorrow morning at breakfast that you will do as I wish in this matter, or I'll never call you son of mine, or while I live see you again. You shall go from my roof until I am dead and the laws of the land recall you as the heir."

"Do you mean this, father?"

"I do, so help me God! I swear it."

With angry manner Lord Glyndon left the room, and full an hour Sir Paul paced to and fro in sad silence.

Then he sat down to a desk and wrote two letters, which, after he had finished, he read slowly over aloud.

The first one ran as follows:

"CASTLE GLYNDON, }
Thursday night. }

"FATHER:

"As I can never grant the desire of your heart, to marry one whom I do not love, and who does not love me, I take you at your word and leave your house forever."

"For the wealth and title that would come to me by your death I care nothing. I have not been very extravagant, as you know, and have saved up, out of the income your generosity allowed me, sufficient to keep me from want until I can earn a living for myself."

"You need never expect again to see me, father; but I do not part in anger with you. My thoughts for you are those that I have ever held."

"May you find some one to cheer your old age, and leave a blessing, not a curse upon."

"Your unhappy son."

This letter Paul sealed and addressed to his father.

Then he read the other he had written.

"CASTLE GLYNDON, }
Thursday night. }

"LADY LEONORE:

"The worst is over. I refused this night to become your suitor, and you need feel no longer dread."

"Thanks to your frankness in making known to me the plot of our parents, I held the winning hand, and yet I did not of course tell my father that there was an obstacle in the way—that you loved another, and made me your confidant trusting to my honor to release you."

"May you be happy with the one you love will be ever the wish of"

"Your friend,

"PAUL GLYNDON."

Laying his father's letter upon his desk, and calling the butler and giving him the one to Leonore to deliver, Paul went to his room and set to work in earnest to pack up his traps.

Two hours after he left the mansion, bearing his own baggage, and half an hour later caught the midnight train to London, where he arrived in time to take passage on the steamer that sailed at sunrise for New York.

Through the whole passage out the weather seemed in unison with the feelings of the young self-constituted exile—it was so dreary and miserable, and with gloomy thoughts he kept to himself.

Yet his sorrows did not prevent him from often gazing upon a beautiful young girl, who, leaning upon the arm of her father, would dare the rough weather in a morning and afternoon promenade.

In one of these walks, and when not protected by her father, a large wave boarded the vessel, and the maiden was swept into the sea.

But, almost instantly, Paul followed her into the wild waters, and the cry of alarm ran through the ship.

After a long time the steamer was hove to, and the life-boat launched and sent to the rescue.

In the boat went the almost distracted father of the young girl, and with a heart too full to speak he took his daughter from the strong arms of Paul.

The maiden was insensible, but Paul made light of his ducking, and said the young girl would soon come round all right.

And his words proved true, for an hour after the happy father led Paul into the cabin at the request of his daughter.

Thus met Paul Glyndon and Nellie Norman, and the young man could not but feel glad that he had not fallen in love with the Lady Leonore. He even blessed the hour that he had been driven an exile from his father's roof.

CHAPTER III

THE DOUBLE TRAGEDY.

A MAN lay dead upon the ground in the shadow of a dense forest, and a stream of blood that oozed from a deep knife-thrust in his side was slowly soaking into the earth.

Over the dead bent a tall, slender form, clad, as was the man at his feet, in a suit of buckskin.

The two were strangely unlike—the dead being of a muscular form, and his bewhiskered face cruel, savage and coarse, while his hand clasped a knife, and a rifle and revolver lay by his side.

The living was attired in a suit of the finest buckskin, richly worked with beads and quills, wore fine calf-skin cavalry boots, silver spurs, and his face was shaded by a broad hat of softest felt, encircled by a gold band.

In his belt were a pair of handsome pistols, and a blood-stained knife he held in his hand.

A few paces off stood a bay stallion, equipped with Mexican saddle and bridle, all profusely silver-mounted, and to the horn hung a handsome rifle and long horse-hair lasso.

Back, further in the timber, lay writhing in death-agonies a spotted mustang, a bullet-wound in his flank.

Did this strange scene, there on the far frontier and miles from cabin or fort, signify that there had been a deadly meeting between those two men, one of whom had come off victorious? Let the sequel show.

The face of the living was darkly bronzed, intelligent, utterly fearless, and with a look of sternness seldom found on one so young, for he was scarcely twenty-five.

It was a handsome face, with splendid eyes, and a somewhat reckless mouth shaded by a long, dark, silken mustache.

His eyes were glancing down into the white, upturned face of the dead, whereon rested a look of horror, as though the orbs dimmed by death had beheld some weird specter ere they had closed forever—there was such a look of terror in their stony stare.

In his left hand the living held a bundle of what seemed to be old letters, and a few golden trinkets, and in the right was the knife with the blood-stained blade.

"It will detain me, yet I suppose I must bury him," and the speaker glanced through the dense foliage toward the sun, which was nearing the western horizon.

As he did so, the sound of approaching hoofs broke on his ear, and instantly he was on the alert, his rifle in hand.

Did he contemplate retreat, it was too late now; he must remain and face the consequences, whatever they might be.

Then up dashed a party of horsemen, a dozen in number, and at a glance recognizable as men of the border—not of the hunter, guide or trapper class, but calling themselves such and living upon their fellow-men—a wild set for an honest man to meet alone.

"Hullo! who have we here?" and the party drew rein suddenly.

"Speak up, stranger, an' gi'n an account o' yerself; who is yer?" said one who appeared to be the leader.

With a calm, almost indifferent manner the young man gazed upon his questioner, and said, quietly, and with a very slight foreign accent:

"By what right do you question me?"

Ere the leader could reply, his eyes, for the first time, fell upon the dead body back in the shadow of a large tree, and he cried out:

"Furies! you've kilt somebody!"

At once the whole party threw themselves from their horses and approached the slain man.

"Bill Berkely, as I are a sinner! Boys, he's kilt—poor Bill," cried the leader, bending over the body, while a cry of rage went up from all sides.

Suddenly the leader again confronted the young man, and said, hoarsely:

"Stranger, I axed you a question jist now which you didn't answer."

"You gave me no time," quietly responded the young man, still holding his rifle ready for use, and now standing beside his steed.

"Waal, I gi'n yer time now. Who is yer, an' why did yer kill poor Bill?"

"As to what my name is, that is none of your business. Who killed that man I do not know."

"Look heur, stranger, you talk too fresh fur

a man in your position. Cheek ain't gwine to help you, so you mout as well let up. So tell us why did you kill our pard thar?" and the speaker pointed to the dead man.

"I did not kill him. I found him dead, half an hour ago, lying where he is now."

They all gazed into the face of the young man. If guilty, he certainly did not show it by his looks; he was as cool as ice and indifferent, it seemed.

"That's too thin! Bill Berkely didn't kill himself. That won't go down; you is a suspicious-lookin' chap, anyway, an' you an' nobody else is the man who kilt our pard."

"You are a liar!"

The words came out crisp and stern, and the dark eyes flashed dangerously. He certainly did not seem intimidated by his dangerous position.

"Boys, do you hear this gamecock? He says I'm a liar," cried the leader, as if desiring to get aid from his followers ere he ventured more with a man who had no fear of him.

"Yes, we hear him. Let his tongue wag a little, fur we'll choke it off afore long," said one of the men.

Turning again to the young man, the leader said, rudely:

"Stranger, I hates to quarrel with a dyin' man, an' I won't with you, even if you does have the cheek to call me a liar; but you see our findin' yer heur proves you kilt Bill—don't it, fellers?"

"It sartinly do," said several voices, and the looks of all betokened danger ahead for the young man, who stood quietly facing his accusers.

"You say you found Bill dead, lyin' heur?" continued the leader.

"Yes; who killed him I do not know."

"Stranger, let me have a glance at yer knife," and the man advanced a step.

"Stand back! If you advance on me, I will shoot you down!"

There was no mistaking the threat in the ringing voice, nor the flash in the eyes, and the leader paused quickly, while he cried:

"See, boys, his knife is all bloody; he sartinly kilt poor Bill."

"My knife is blood-stained, I admit; but not with the blood of that man. If you seek his murderer look elsewhere for him."

As he spoke, the stranger suddenly bounded into his saddle; a word to his horse and he was dashing away, ere his surprised foes recognized his intention.

But only for an instant did they hesitate, and then a dozen rifles sprung to as many shoulders, a dozen sharp reports, and the noble horse, with an almost human cry, fell heavily in his tracks, hurling his rider far over his head.

Yet, like a flash, the stranger was upon his feet, and with a revolver in each hand, confronted his foes as they rushed upon him.

But he was one and they a dozen, and they sprung forward to the attack.

Then rapidly rattled forth several shots, and a confused mass of struggling humanity followed.

For several moments the unequal and desperate combat lasted, and then it abruptly ceased. The stranger lay bound upon the ground, bleeding from several wounds, yet a grim smile upon his face as his eyes fell upon those of his foes who had fallen ere he was conquered.

Above him stood his assailants, with scowling faces and threats of speedy vengeance.

"Now, I guess as how you've run yer head inter the slip-knot fer sartin," said the leader of the band, glancing savagely down upon the bound prisoner at his feet.

"I do not doubt but that you will kill me; but again I say that I found your comrade dead. I did not kill him."

"An' yer didn't kill Tom Sykes, an' Bony Bob, or Rip Williams, nuther, I 'specks you wish to say."

"Oh, yes, I killed them, for they attacked me. I fired at you, too, and why I missed you I do not know," boldly said the prisoner.

"You didn't miss me fur, 'cause I got it through my hat; but I'll soon put you whar you'll do no more shootin', young feller. Boys, git me a lariat and we'll run this game-cock up to yonder limb."

At the cruel remark of the ruffian the stranger made no reply; his nerves did not even quiver, though he turned a shade paler, as the men, with considerable haste, set to work to obey their leader's orders.

In a twinkling one end of a long lariat was thrown over a projecting limb, some twenty feet from the ground, and a slip-knot made in the other and thrown around the prisoner's neck.

"Now, ef you isn't skeert so bad yer legs won't hold yer, jist stan' up," said the cruel leader.

"You are a fool. Do you think I'm going to aid in my own death?"

"Waal, it's hardly right ter ax yer to drive the hearse, seein' as how you pervide the corpse. Up with him, boys; stan' him on his pins."

The prisoner at once stood upright, calm, fearless almost to recklessness.

"Do you really intend to hang me?" he asked, quietly.

"We does. We is the Regulators on this border, an' as yer kilt Bill Berkely it is our duty as honest citizens ter hang you."

"Men, I am not afraid to die; I have faced death too often to fear it; but I do not wish to be hung like a dog. Take me to the nearest fort or settlement, and let me be legally tried. If sentenced, then, to death I will not say a word; but this is murder."

"You hain't got nuthin' to say now ag'in' yer sentence. Boys, we're losin' time; up with him!"

A sudden, hard pull upon the rope, and the man hung dangling to the end of it, and ten feet from the ground, while half a dozen wild ruffians held the other end of the lariat and unfeelingly gazed upon their victim.

A moment the strong man struggled; then his face grew black, and death seemed coming nearer and nearer to him.

But suddenly there came a puff of smoke from a distant clump of bushes; a sharp crack followed; a bullet whizzed through the air, a twang was heard, and the hanging man fell to the earth, the lariat having been severed by the shot of some unerring marksman.

All eyes at once turned in the direction from whence the shot came, and beheld a horseman ride slowly out of the clump of scrub-trees; then upon every lip was the startled cry:

"It is Death-Trailer, the Scout!"

CHAPTER IV.

HOLDING THE WINNING HAND.

THE horseman, whose sudden appearance had so surprised the band of ruffians, rode slowly forward until he drew rein near the spot where all stood awaiting him.

"What means this, Ned Doyle?" he asked, sternly, his eagle eye resting upon the leader of the band, who seemed to dread catching the gaze fixed upon him.

No reply came, and the horseman remained silent, his eyes running over the faces of those present.

As he sat there upon his superb black stallion, that with arched neck and impatient mood champed the bit, horse and rider presented a striking and splendid appearance.

The rider was a shade over six feet, broad-shouldered and perfect in form, every curve of which denoted great strength and activity.

He was dressed in fringed and beaded buckskin hunting-shirt and leggings; his feet were incased in moccasins, and a dove-colored felt hat, with brim turned up on the left side, sheltered his head.

His hair, falling in wavy masses below his shoulders, was dark brown, and soft as a woman's, while he wore a mustache and imperial which added to the manliness of his face.

Man or woman looking upon him would have pronounced him the *beau-ideal* of perfect and magnificent manhood.

What his age was were hard to tell; he might be thirty-seven, yet he looked hardly thirty.

Across his saddle lay a repeating rifle—one of late invention, and the only one of the kind on the border, while in his belt were a pair of ivory and silver-mounted revolvers, and a second pair peeped out of the holsters on his saddle-horn, and a knife rested on his hip.

A serviceable saddle, two saddle-pockets, a blanket and gayly-colored *serape* rolled tightly together, and a coiled lariat completed his equipment.

"Again I ask, Ned Doyle, what means this?"

"I don't see what business it is o' yours, Death-Trailer," doggedly said the leader.

"As I choose to make it my business, I expect an answer."

"An' I refuse to answer."

"Well, it matters not. I'll take your game out of your hands and then report you to Colonel Decatur at the fort. If he doesn't make this country too hot for you, why, *I will!*"

"Look-a-heur, Trailer—this stranger kilt poor Bill Berkely, an'—"

"Did you see him kill him?"

"Not adzactly; but we caught him standin' over the body an' his knife all bloody."

"It may look suspicious; but that is not proof; besides, if he did, he doubtless acted in self-defense to prevent being robbed and murdered by a cutthroat."

"Bill was no cutthroat, Trailer."

"He belonged to your band, Ned Doyle," quietly said the scout.

"Does yer call me a cutthroat, Death-Trailer?" menacingly said the ruffian.

"I call you everything that is mean; hold on, Ned Doyle, I'll shoot you where you stand if you don't take your hand from that pistol; take it off, I say!"

Ned Doyle sullenly obeyed while he muttered:

"You holds the winnin' hand now, pard—"

"With your gang at your back—eight to one? Yes, I think I do hold the trump card, for all of you are like coyotes, snarl but never bite."

A meaning little laugh broke from the scout's lips, and it proved too much for Ned Doyle, for it stung him to madness.

Quickly drawing his knife he rushed forward, crying:

"You dare not dismount, and with knife to knife tell me that, Death-Trailer."

In an instant the scout was upon the ground, his knife drawn, and with quick step he advanced upon the man now standing at bay.

Ned Doyle knew Death-Trailer well. He was the most noted scout on the border—a quiet, unassuming man when let alone, a very devil when aroused to deadly combat.

For years he had been the terror of the redskins and the outlaws of the border, and so untiring and successful had he been upon every trail he followed that he soon won the name of Death-Trailer. If he possessed other name none knew what it was; in fact, he was a mystery to all.

And Death-Trailer knew Ned Doyle well as a man who had been long suspected of being guilty of the foulest crimes, aided by a band of desperadoes as evil as himself; yet who had so well covered up their tracks that nothing positive had been proven upon them.

Ned Doyle was also known to possess undoubted courage—had killed several men with the knife, with which he was considered a desperate hand, for he was of herculean build, strong and active.

From instinct the two men had hated each other, and now, driven to frenzy by the scout's words, Ned Doyle was determined to test if Death-Trailer was his equal. Had he been alone with the scout discretion would have been the better part of valor for him; but among his comrades he dare not yield now without a combat.

In an instant Ned Doyle had stripped himself for the fray which he knew must be deadly.

But the scout simply threw aside his belt of arms. He seemed to feel a confidence in himself that went far to unnerve his antagonist.

"I am ready, Ned Doyle," he said, calmly, and the ruffian sprung upon him, knife uplifted.

But the blow was dashed aside, and the keen blade of the scout gashed the arm of his foe.

This was a bad beginning for Ned Doyle, and he, as well as his comrades, felt it.

Again, however, he rushed to the attack, and again received a severe wound across the breast.

This was too much for his evil human nature to stand, and the ruffian cried out:

"Boys, will you see him murder me? Cut ther devil down!"

The gang at once obeyed. They were only too willing to see the scout die, for he was getting too dangerous a foe to them, and they feared him more than any other person on the border.

Drawing their knives, they sprung forward, forming a semicircle around the brave scout, who, placing himself against a tree, calmly awaited the onset, for, relying upon fair play being shown, he had laid aside his revolvers.

But the affair looked dubious for the scout; there were too many against him; they held the winning hand to a certainty, for what could one man do against such fearful odds?

Still, Death-Trailer appeared calm and confident. If he dreaded the result, his enemies should not see it. If he must die, he would first avenge himself.

"Why do yer wait? Cut him down!" yelled Ned Doyle, bleeding from two wounds and in a perfect fury.

"*Ruffians, I hold the winning hand!*"

The strange voice startled all, and they quickly glanced behind them.

To their horror they beheld one whom they believed dead—the man they had hung but a few minutes before!

There he stood, cool, upright, determined—his face yet spotted from the choking he had received—his breath hard-drawn, but every inch a man, and a dangerous one, too, for he held leveled in each hand a revolver.

And those two threatening muzzles seemed to cover every man in that crowd; each one felt that he was looking upon certain death if he moved, and consequently he remained motionless.

For full a minute the strange tableau lasted, and then the stranger again spoke:

"Say the word, sir, and I will drop half of them before they can draw a weapon."

He did not look at Death-Trailer; his eyes still rested upon the crowd, yet the scout knew to whom he spoke, and said in return:

"No, let them go. Another time, whenever I cross the path of one of them, he shall die. I give you warning—*go!*"

Ned Doyle and his confederates felt that they were caught in their own trap—the biters were bitten, and they hastily backed from the spot, still covered by the revolvers, mounted their horses and dashed away, leaving the steeds of their slain comrades.

"I owe you my life, sir," and the stranger turned to Death-Trailer and offered his hand, which the latter warmly grasped, while he returned:

"We are quits, then, for I would have been cut to pieces but for your timely aid. I hope you do not suffer from your harsh treatment?"

"Not much; I will be all right soon; but I

was never nearer death. If I remember rightly, you severed the lariat from a distance with a shot; you must be a crack hand with the rifle."

"And you with the revolver, I judge, from present appearances," and the scout glanced around him upon the dead renegades who still lay where they had fallen.

"They came upon me as I stood by the side of yonder body. I found him dead where he lies; but they accused me of murdering him, attacked me, and would have killed me, but for you, sir. Permit me to again thank you for my life. I am Baron Henrique Saville, a French nobleman, and after spending some time on the Texas border I am now looking up adventure on the prairies of the North-west. I bear a letter to Colonel Decatur, who commands a fort near here."

"Yes, a half a score of miles distant. I am on my way thither; but have you come alone through this country?" asked the scout, in surprise.

"No, I have with me my servant. He is encamped a mile or two distant. I came off after game, and unfortunately met that renegade gang."

"Yet, with your servant only, you do not mean to say you came through this country?"

"Yes, all the way from Texas. You forget that I told you I had spent a long time upon the prairies of the South-west, and there became a fair trailer and prairie-man."

"A splendid one, I should say, sir; but come, we will go to your camp and then seek the fort. We will transfer your saddle and bridle to one of these mustangs left by Ned Doyle and his gang."

"Yes, he will do well enough for Dennis. Fortunately I did not ride my best steed this afternoon, but took the one my servant rides."

While Baron Saville went to take his bridle and saddle from his dead horse, the scout walked toward the mustangs, hitched a few paces distant.

This led him by the dead body of Bill Berkely, and he paused and glanced down upon the upturned face, while a sigh escaped his lips.

Muttering a few words to himself, he was about to pass on, when something at his feet attracted his attention.

Quickly he stooped and picked it up—glanced at it, and his face turned deadly pale. He held in his hand the bundle of old letters and trinkets that Baron Saville had taken from the dead body of Bill Berkely.

For a moment the scout seemed deeply moved; then he hastily placed them in an inner pocket of his hunting-shirt, and went on after the mustang.

"Will you leave the bodies unburied?" asked Baron Saville.

"Yes, they are fit food for coyotes and vultures," replied the scout, moodily, and springing into his saddle, he led the way from the timber.

A ride of a mile and both men drew rein suddenly—a look of surprise upon each face, as there came from a distant thicket a wild, terrified cry—a cry in a woman's voice!

But Death-Trailer was no man to hesitate when any one needed his aid, and he cried quickly:

"You are considerably shaken up yet, sir. Ride on to your camp and then to the fort; it lies yonder; I will see you there."

Then Death-Trailer dashed away, leaving the baron, who was really suffering considerably from the rude treatment he had received at the hands of the renegades, to go on alone.

As the scout flew on another wild shriek pierced through the timber. Some woman was evidently in deadly danger.

CHAPTER V.

THE PRAIRIE WAIF.

UPON arriving at the edge of the thicket, the scout hastily dismounted, left his steed standing, and with rifle in hand, glided noiselessly and quickly into the shadow of the timber.

The cries had ceased, and Death-Trailer dreaded lest he had come too late; some crime, he feared, had been committed, and the victim a woman; yet who could that woman be?

No, she was yet alive. He heard voices, and the next instant he came in sight of an exciting scene.

There was a small open space in the timber, and upon this the last rays of the setting sun fell brightly on a strange tableau.

A young girl of sixteen, perhaps, knelt where the sunlight fell full upon her; she rested upon one knee and foot, and her body was thrown back, her face upraised, and her uplifted right arm held a small, narrow-bladed knife.

She was dressed in the picturesque costume of the Indian maiden—leggings, short skirt, moccasins, and hunting-shirt, with short sleeves, all richly embroidered with various colored beads.

Upon her arms, above the elbows, she wore wide silver bands, and her head-dress was a coronet of beautiful feathers.

Yet she was no Indian, for her hair was the brightest auburn, and her complexion, though bronzed by exposure, showed the pure blood of the pale-face.

Before her, his hand outstretched and holding a pistol, stood a burly-looking borderman—a man of cruel countenance, stout frame, and at a glance recognized by the scout as the inseparable companion of Bill Berkely, who lay dead a mile distant in the timber.

"Back! I now have the advantage, for I am armed, and you are a coward."

The voice of the young girl was clear and determined, and the bully felt that she spoke the truth.

But he said, savagely:

"I've a mind to shoot yer, gal."

"No, you are afraid the shot will be heard," boldly answered the girl.

"Then yell you let out awhile back went further then the noise of a pistol, durn you."

"Then you had better make tracks, for if I was heard and some one comes to my rescue, I would not give much for your life."

"You wa'n't heard; ther's no one near heur."

"Then why don't you shoot me?" boldly asked the girl.

"I've a mind to."

"I don't doubt but that you would, if you were not afraid. Come, now, you go your way and I'll go mine, for if you advance upon me I will kill you."

"You talk mighty cheeky fur a gal."

"It is because I am talking to a coward. Stand back! I wish to go; it is getting late."

"No you don't. Bill Berkely'll soon be back, and he'd be as mad as a hornet ef I let you go. He's got some reason for holdin' yer, you know."

"And that is why you killed my poor mother and bore me off! Oh, devil in human shape, if there is a God he will punish you for this crime."

Overcome by her emotions at some painful remembrance, the young girl bent her face in her hands and sobbed; she forgot that she faced a human monster.

In an instant he took advantage of her weakness, and springing forward, seized her in his powerful arms, while he hissed forth, gloatingly:

"I've got yer ag'in, my beauty. Now I'll see that yer don't git away."

But, suddenly, a dark shadow fell upon him; a grasp of iron was upon his throat, and he was bent backward as though a mere child.

Then the rosy sunlight flashed upon a descending knife; there was a dull thud, a grating of steel against bone, and the ruffian was hurled back a dead man—slain by the hand of Death-Trailer!

Then the scout turned toward the young girl. She was crouched upon the ground, her hands clasped, her eyes wildly gazing upon him.

"Oh, sir, from what have you not saved me!" she gasped.

"From a devil in human form, it seems. Come, you are unnerved; take a swallow of this," and the scout placed in the trembling hands a flask of brandy, from which the maiden took a sup; then she burst into tears.

Death-Trailer said nothing to comfort her; he knew she would feel better after her cry, and he stood quietly by, watching her.

Presently she wiped away her tears, and turned upon the scout a face of wondrous beauty—a face that caused his heart to throb violently, and his teeth to set hard—for it recalled to him one he had known in the long ago, when life had seemed to him a happy dream.

It was a strange resemblance, one that moved him deeply, and he said, with emotion he could ill conceal:

"Tell me your name, child!"

"My name is Lulu Lawton, sir."

"And why are you here?"

"I was brought here by that man and one other, whom he called Bill Berkely. Our train was attacked at night; we were but a few, seeking homes still further west, and all were slain—alas! my poor mother with the others. But these wretches spared my life."

"And they were in the attack upon your train?"

"Yes, sir; they had a score of Indians with them; but after the massacre these two men separated from the red-skins, and came here. Yonder is their camp. We have been there since yesterday, and this man guarded me while the other went off on some other deviltry, I suppose."

"And this brute attacked you?"

"No, I tried to escape and he caught me. Then I got away from him, and seizing his knife from his belt I threatened him and kept him off."

"Brave girl! Thank Heaven I arrived as I did. Now tell me, child, whom have you to care for you now?"

"No one, sir," said the girl, in a tone of deepest sadness; then she added:

"My mother and myself lived at a ranch near Omaha, and, not liking it there, she came further west, and alas, met her death. I have not a relative in the world that I know of."

"Poor, poor child! You shall not be friendless; you shall go with me, and I will take care of you. Come, my horse will easily bear your light weight as well as mine."

CHAPTER VI.

THE FORT'S GUESTS.

THE fort to which Colonel Hugh Decatur had been ordered was one of considerable importance, and will be known as Fort Helen in this romance, the commandant naming it after his beautiful daughter.

It was built on a large and comfortable scale, had pleasant cabin quarters for the officers and their wives, fronted upon a large stream, and was surrounded by beautiful prairie and woodland scenery, with a view of the mountains not very far distant.

East of the fort a few miles was a sparsely-settled country, in the midst of which was located a tavern, several grog-shops, a blacksmith shop, log church and a few dozen cabins.

This place, by courtesy, was called Decatur City, in honor of the colonel of the fort, for it sprung into existence after the establishment of Fort Helen.

Having given the reader an idea of the new scenes into which my story leads him, I will now return to a pleasant room in Fort Helen, on the evening following the incidents related in the several foregoing chapters, and a year after the attack upon Colonel Decatur and his daughter by the Mexican band under Mercado.

In this room, adorned tastefully with many little nicknacks worked by fair fingers, sat two maidens.

One of them the reader will at once recognize as Helen Decatur, grown more beautiful in the year that has gone by since that evening when her cousin was shot down in the far-away Texas chaparrals.

The other is also a young girl of surpassing beauty, yet just the opposite of Helen, for she is a brunette, with the blackest waving hair, a dark, yet brilliant complexion, and eyes of almost weird beauty. She was a woman to give up life for love or revenge.

This maiden was Ida Vincent, the daughter of an old army officer, who, dying a year before, had left his only child to the care of Colonel Decatur.

Taking a great fancy to the orphan girl, Colonel Decatur had willingly accepted the charge, and between Ida and Helen at once sprung up a most sisterly love.

As the two sat together that evening in Helen's room, which led by a communicating door into Ida's chamber, a gentle tap was heard, and Colonel Decatur entered.

"Girls, I have news for you," he said, pleasantly, throwing himself into a chair.

"Good news, I hope, sir?" said Ida.

"That depends upon how you take it. You are to have a rival, who may take some of the young officers from your society."

"A rival! Whom can she be?" asked Helen.

"I will tell you, and not keep you longer in suspense. You know Death-Trailer?"

"Who does not know him, father, on this frontier?" asked Helen, while a blush stole over her face.

"Well, he arrived an hour since and brought with him one of the prettiest girls I ever saw—a mere child of fifteen, I judge, and her story is a sad one—the same old tale to tell—Indians led by white men attacking a train and killing all, while she was borne off by the white leaders, than whom two greater devils never disgraced the border.

"The poor child's mother was killed, and she having no one to care for her, the scout has adopted her as his ward, and a dangerous ward I fear she will be."

Helen turned a little pale, yet said quietly:

"Where is she now?"

"In the spare room off my office. She was utterly worn out, and I told her to go in there and lie down. In an instant she was asleep, and I would not awaken her. And no wonder she is tired out, poor child, after all she has gone through."

"But, where did the scout find her?" asked Ida Vincent, with interest.

"Ah, I forgot to tell you. She was left in camp with one of these men, while the other went away somewhere, and in endeavoring to escape from her captor she was overtaken and the scout heard her cry for help."

"Of course he went to the rescue, and his description of the tableau he saw is startling. I'll get him to tell you of it some time."

"Well, he turned the tableau into a tragedy, killed the devilish monster, and brought the girl here, and you both must do all in your power to make her life a happy one."

"We will, father. Poor child, my heart yearns to show her how I feel for her," said Helen.

"Yes, she shall not want for friends, for I, too, know what it is to be an orphan, though you have ever been as a father to me," said Ida Vincent, warmly.

"Good girls, both of you; now I will tell you more news."

"More news still?" cried both maidens in a breath.

"Yes, the woods are full of it, as the soldiers say; but to my story; I have a beau for you!"

"A beau?"

"Yes; a French baron."

"Nonsense, colonel! What could a French baron want here?" asked Ida.

"We'll find out what he wants when he sees you two. But, it is true; there is a French baron here. He arrived an hour ago, shortly after the scout."

"Then Death-Trailer did not find him, too, colonel?"

"Yes he did, Ida, and in the nick of time; but listen, for it is quite a romance."

"Baron Henrique Saville—how is that for a pretty name?—is a gentleman of wealth, and, fond of adventure, he has been hunting on the Texas plains, in company with an Irish servant—a comical genius, I assure you."

"The baron or the servant, papa?"

"The servant, of course. The baron's no fool, but a splendid fellow, and brings a letter to me from Major Rand. You remember Tom Rand, Helen?"

"Well, he came, with only his Irish servant, all the way from the Rio Grande, meeting with numerous adventures he tells me, and I do not doubt it; but his worst adventure occurred within a few miles of the fort, when the scout rescued him—"

"That mysterious Death-Trailer again?" demanded Ida.

"Yes, he always turns up at the right time. Well, the baron went into camp, and then set out for some game, for he did not know how near he was to his journey's end. In the woods, it seems, he came upon the dead body of a man, a knife-wound in his side, and his horse wounded mortally."

"As he stood by his side up dashed a band of mounted men, who happened to be Ned Doyle and his gang. Oh, that I could hang those fellows without trial!"

"Well, he was accused of the murder of the dead man, who was none other than Bill Berkely, one of the devil's imps that carried off the young girl, Lulu."

"To hasten with my story. The baron denied the murder, sprung upon his horse and bolted; but they shot down his horse, ran upon him, and after a desperate struggle, in which he killed three of them, praise be to God! he was captured."

"A bold man he must be," said Helen, the pluck of the baron winning her admiration.

"Yes, a bold fellow indeed; but he nearly lost his life, for he was hung up by the murderous gang, and was dying, when Death-Trailer came upon the scene, cut the rope with one of his unerring shots, and went to the rescue."

"The result was a bowie-knife duel between Ned Doyle and the scout, in which the gang of imps joined when they saw their leader getting the worst of it."

"But up rises the baron, having partially recovered from his hanging, and with his revolvers sides with the scout, and the cutthroats are put to flight."

"But who killed the man the baron found in the woods?" asked Ida.

"That is one of those things that nobody can tell; nobody knows. To continue: the scout was on his way to the baron's camp with him, when they heard the cry of the young girl, and, as the Frenchman was suffering from his injuries, Death-Trailer told him to get his servant and go on to the fort, while he went to the rescue. Now you know all."

"Is the baron handsome?" questioned Ida.

"Exceedingly, and a brunette; besides, he is very young; but in the morning you shall see for yourselves. Now I must leave you, as the scout starts within the hour with a party on the trail of the murderers of that young girl's mother and friends. Good-night."

CHAPTER VII.

THE TRAIL ASSASSIN.

THE scout, known far and wide as Death-Trailer, had been for years on the frontier, drifting hither and thither as he pleased, and owing allegiance to no man.

Always when there was deadly work to be done—a raid after Sioux, or an attack upon a camp of renegades, Death-Trailer was sought after and became a ruling spirit; but after the work was ended he would again start forth upon some lonely expedition, to be gone for weeks, perhaps for months.

Who he was none knew. He never frequented the drinking-saloons, always kept away from company and seemed to enjoy his own society above all others until a circumstance happened that made him chief of scouts at the fort.

This circumstance was his meeting with Colonel Decatur and his small party lost upon the prairie in a storm.

He quickly guided them to a place of refuge, and taking a fancy to him the colonel offered him the position of Chief of Scouts at Fort Helen.

Whether the beautiful face of the colonel's daughter had aught to do with the scout's acceptance of the offer none knew; but, certain it is, he seemed to ever like to be near Helen, and in many ways showed his respect and admiration for her, while she, recognizing that he was not what he appeared, but a man who had been brought up amid other scenes, a man who had seen the world, and who had doubtless sought

the frontier to hide from some great grief, felt deeply interested in the strange adventurer, an interest that was daily growing more intense.

Learning from her father's words that Death-Trailer was to start forth again upon some perilous duty, Helen arose, and with an excuse to Ida walked forth into the grounds of the fort.

It was bright moonlight, and she beheld coming toward her a tall form which she knew well—that of the scout.

"Miss Decatur, good-evening! Is it not a lovely night?" he said, advancing toward her.

"Yes, Mr. Radcliffe"—he had told Colonel Decatur that such was his name—"and it tempts me to a promenade; will you join me?"

Now, though a scout, no one ever thought of treating Death-Trailer with less respect than they did the commandant, and not an officer at the fort but was only too glad to have his friendship, so that it would not look strange for Helen to be seen walking with him. She quietly took his proffered arm, and the two strolled toward the river together.

"Mr. Radcliffe," began Helen, halting in the shadow of a large willow, "I asked you to come here because I had something to tell you. Do you know that you have an enemy at the fort?"

"I have many enemies, Miss Decatur."

"That is evasive. Who do you think is your enemy here?"

"I cannot tell, I assure you, and if it is not yourself I do not care."

"Me! I am your—but do not suspect me, Mr. Radcliffe," and Helen suddenly changed her words.

"I hope I cannot do so. I only said if it were not you, I would not care who it was," responded the scout, earnestly.

Helen was silent a moment and then continued:

"On this very spot this afternoon I picked up this piece of paper; take it."

The scout received the slip, and with the moonlight falling upon it, read:

"The plan is ripening; the scout suspects nothing; track him when he again leaves the fort and see that he never returns, then you shall have your reward. I leave all in your hands and await the issue."

"Do you recognize the hand, Mr. Radcliffe?"

"No; it is evidently disguised, but that it is intended for me I have no doubt. I thank you, Miss Decatur; you have placed me upon my guard."

"I am so glad. Something told me that it referred to you, and if I wrong any one I am sorry, but I think that Captain Burt Graham is an enemy of yours."

"Again I thank you, Miss Decatur," and the scout bowed low.

Helen still hesitated, as if waiting for him to say more, and as he remained silent she said, in a low tone:

"Let us return now, and—please be careful—don't be reckless of your life, Mr. Radcliffe."

The scout bent his gaze upon the maiden and seemed about to speak earnestly; but, checking himself, he said, quietly:

"I will not be caught napping, Miss Decatur. Here we are, at your door; good-night."

"Good-night," echoed Helen, and she disappeared within the cabin, while the scout wended his way to his own quarters, to return to the parade-ground a few moments after, mounted and equipped for the march.

Upon the plaza of the fort a company of cavalry were drawn up, under the command of a young officer by the name of Burt Graham—a wild, dissipated fellow, yet withal a dashing soldier.

"I am ready, Captain Graham. Shall we go?" said Death-Trailer, riding alongside.

"Yes, I have been waiting for you some time," rather impatiently said the officer.

"I was engaged—could not come sooner," shortly replied the scout, and the stockade gate being opened he rode forth, followed by the troopers, the young captain evidently in no very amiable mood.

Having learned from Lulu about the locality of the massacre, the scout rode on at a swift pace, and just at daylight struck the trail of the train.

The tracks showed a light vehicle, half a dozen wagons, and some driven horses and cattle.

After a hasty breakfast the tracking was continued until the trail led into a low range of hills.

Here a sad scene presented itself—a score of dead bodies, already torn to pieces by the wolves and the vultures, strewed the ground, broken wagons, robbed of their contents, and dead horses and cattle—this is what the robbers had left after their devilish work.

Slowly the scout examined the ground, the torn bodies, the wagons, and the field; then he said, calmly:

"This is the work of white men, Captain Graham, though they doubtless were disguised as red-skins. Their trail leads yonder; we will follow it."

What remained of the unfortunates was carefully collected by the sympathizing troopers and decently buried, after which the party set

out, once more following the trail into the hills. It led only a few miles and broke off at the edge of a stream; but the scout was not thwarted; he read the signs well, and in a short while said:

"Captain, you and your company might as well return to the fort. The trail breaks up here and every man nearly takes a different direction. I will remain and scout around for a while, and if I discover anything of importance, will return and report."

"All right, scout; you know best. Forward! march!" and the captain and his men started on their return to the fort.

For some time after their departure Death-Trailer worked hard. Every track, every bent bush, every sign was carefully examined, until at last he seemed to feel satisfied with his discoveries and sat down to rest.

While he sat there in deep thought, he did not see a white face peering at him from a ridge beyond.

Nor did he see a rifle-muzzle shoved above the ridge and pointed directly at his heart.

An instant the barrel of the rifle was motionless, a dark eye peering along it, and then came a sharp crack, a dull thud, and Death-Trailer fell backward.

Slowly the minutes passed away, and yet he moved not; but at last a sigh came from his lips, his arms moved and he sat up, and looked around him in a bewildered manner.

"Ah! I remember; I was shot at. I heard the report, felt the ball strike me, and knew nothing more; but I cannot be much hurt. Let me see; ah, it is here," and he laid his hand over his heart.

"Ha! these have saved my life! How strange, how strange! Yes, here is the bullet," and he drew from the inner pocket of his hunting-shirt the letters and bunch of trinkets he had picked up from beside the dead body of Bill Berkely, and the sight of which so moved him.

In the midst of the golden ornaments, which it had bent and twisted out of shape, was the bullet; they had checked its progress; but the shock had stunned the scout, rendering him breathless for some moments.

"These have saved my life—they were directly over my heart. The fellow aimed well, whoever he may be; and who can he be?"

"That I will soon know; but how strange that my letters to her, my gifts of a few golden trinkets, should save my life! There is a deep mystery in all this. Why should they be here—here on the frontier, when she to whom they were given, she to whom the letters were written, has been in her grave for years? Oh God! how the past rushes before me! But I must not think; I must act."

Rising to his feet, he called his faithful steed grazing near, mounted and rode in the direction from whence he knew the shot must have come.

Reaching the ridge, he dismounted and examined the tracks made by the assassin.

"Here is where he stood. Yes, yonder is where his horse was tied, and I know where the trail will lead; I know who is my enemy."

"Now to follow up this other matter."

Returning to the banks of the stream where the trail of the attackers of the train ended, the scout again dismounted and after a long search struck a lead some distance down the creek.

This trail was evidently made by half a dozen men, and following it up, he found it led into the wildest part of the hills.

Yet though he knew that the odds were greatly against him, he pressed on until he came to a narrow gorge.

"Yes, at the head of this gorge is a cave; there is where they have hidden their plunder. I must work with caution, or I will get into a bees'-nest."

Hiding his horse in a clump of bushes, and with rifle ready for instant use, the scout crept on up the gorge until he came in sight of a small cave in the rocks.

Here he halted and carefully reconnoitered; but neither hearing nor seeing anything suspicious, he sprung forward, and with a revolver in each hand dashed into the mouth of the cavern.

For an instant all was silence, and then a hollow voice said:

"Death-Trailer, is that you?"

"Yes; who are you?"

"Nick Dawson."

"Are you alone?"

"Yes; for God's sake release me and give me something to eat. I am almost starved."

Nick Dawson was a young trapper who often visited the fort, and a man whom the scout liked; but as he often went with Ned Doyle and his gang, Death-Trailer avoided him as much as possible.

Confident now that he had found a clue to those who had attacked the train, the scout went further back into the cave, and accustomed to its darkness now, he beheld the form of the trapper lying, bound hand and foot, upon the rocky flooring of the cavern.

"Nick, I am sorry to find you thus. Who has done this?" said the scout, kindly, as he cut his bonds and raised him to his feet.

"I'll tell you all, Trailer, only first give me something to eat; I am starving."

The scout quickly took some food from his haversack and gave it to the young man, who devoured it ravenously.

"Not too fast, Nick; there is plenty of time. Drink this," and he brought his brandy-flask into requisition.

"I am all right now, Trailer, and will tell you all; listen."

CHAPTER VIII.

A STRANGE INTERVIEW.

WHEN Captain Burt Graham and his troopers returned to the fort, and the young officer reported that the scout had preferred to remain alone on the trail, Colonel Decatur decided that ere long Death-Trailer would return bringing important news.

But as days went by and the scout did not put in an appearance, all at the fort feared that some harm had befallen him, and Colonel Decatur determined to send out a party to look him up if he did not return within the next three days.

In the mean time all went well at the fort—Baron Saville had met the ladies, and all were charmed with his fine manners, dark, handsome face, and splendid appearance generally.

And from their first meeting Ida Vincent had seemed to admire the baron intensely, while he seemed equally taken with her.

His bearing toward Helen was different from that toward Ida. With the former he was almost reverential in manner, and seemed to almost fear her; but with the latter he was free, cordial, and openly expressed his admiration.

And there was another whom he admired—one who had won the hearts of all at the fort, from the colonel down to the Indian guides—that one was Lulu, the Guide's ward.

Her story becoming known, all felt for her, while her beauty and pleasant bearing toward all at once gained her a friend in every one.

Helen, and Ida, too, had at once taken her to their hearts; but toward Ida, Lulu did not feel that warm regard that she had for Helen, and hence the two became the best of friends, and being nearer of an age it was natural.

The absence of the Guide-Scout for days caused them great alarm, and somehow Lulu, with feminine instinct, seemed to read a secret of Helen's—that she loved Death-Trailer.

And though Lulu felt that there was no one in the world she cared for more than she did for her guardian, yet she was not jealous of Helen's love for him, but seemed glad of it.

Thus matters stood one evening, the tenth day of the Guide's absence—an absence that cast a gloom over all.

In the presence of Ida Vincent Baron Saville appeared to forget that the night was creeping on apace, until looking at his watch he saw it was nearly twelve.

Asking pardon for his late stay, he arose and retired to the cabin assigned him as his quarters, and there found Dennis, his Irish servant, fast asleep upon the floor.

Now, Dennis was a character in his way. If he did not know any one he would introduce himself, no matter what their rank or station, and if there was anything he did not know it was not for want of endeavoring to find it out.

With the blarney of his race he had worked his way into the regard of soldiers, cooks and servants, and had afforded Helen and Lulu much amusement; but Ida he did not like, as he frankly told his master, when he saw him so attentive to that young lady.

"Dennis, get up," said the baron, as he entered the room. "It is time all honest folks should be in bed."

"Jist what I was thinking, Masther Henrique. Yez sh'u'd ave bin in bed these two mortal hours; but yez has been sparkin' that gal wid the two desatful eyes, while I'm afther waitin' up fur ye."

"Silence! You must not speak so of Miss Vincent; she's an angel."

"May ther divil take a loikin' to me ef I b'laves it, yer honor. Now thim other two, thim's angels, an' ther wings is sproutin', but as fur Miss Veencent, she's—"

"Hush your palaver, sir, and go and find out at what hour in the morning the party starts in search of the Guide-Scout. I've a mind to go with them."

"An' git hung ag'in? No yer don't, Masther Henrique."

"Did you hear me, Dennis?"

"No, sir, I'm dafé."

"Then I will go myself."

"Go yersilf, will yez? Thin Dinnis will save yez that trouble; I'm off," and the Irishman disappeared.

Once in the darkness he stopped to consider whether he should not wait awhile outside and then return with a false report of the hour, so that his master could not go, for one of Dennis's weaknesses was his great love for Henrique Saville.

As he stood there meditating, he beheld a form gliding down toward the river.

"Be jabers! it's a woman," he muttered.

"Where the divil is she goin', an' phat kin she be afther?"

Now, Dennis's curiosity once excited and he

would face any danger to satisfy it; so he glided on after the form with a quick, noiseless tread.

Under the same tree where Helen had warned Death-Trailer of danger the figure halted, and Dennis, by a flank movement, gained a good position for observation behind a log upon the river-bank.

Impatiently to and fro the figure paced, and Dennis watched her every movement, until a hasty ejaculation arose to her lips, and an approaching form caught the quick eye of the Irishman.

"You are late. This is a desolate place for a woman to wait alone," said the first comer.

"Howly Moses! It's *her*," ejaculated Dennis to himself.

"Had our lives been different, Ida, there would be no need of these stolen meetings."

"Be jabbers! it's Capthin Graham," muttered Dennis.

"My life suits me. Its only drawback is the hated tie that binds me to you."

Now Dennis was all attention.

"Why did you marry me then?" demanded the man.

"Because I was a fool—a romantic idiot. When I grew to womanhood I saw my mistake."

"Then why not make known our marriage, and become legally divorced?"

"Never! After long years of hiding this secret make it known now, sir? You are a fool, Burt Graham!"

"I was when I married you; but I *will* make it known."

"You! I dare you! You forget that I have the proofs of how Captain Dudley died, and you the senior lieutenant to step into his shoes."

"Oh, God! why bring that specter up from the grave, Ida?" groaned the man.

"To hold you in check, Graham. Now listen to me, for I bade you meet me here to tell you of a bold plan I have in view."

"Bold devilment, if you plan it," sneered the officer.

"Thanks! Call it what you will, but listen."

"Go on."

"I intend to marry soon."

"You are already married, Ida."

"To you, yes; but I intend to marry a *man*."

"Indeed! and you know what it is called to marry one person when you are already bound to another?"

"Bigamy I think is the word. Well, I intend to commit *bigamy*."

"Who is the unfortunate, madam?"

"Baron Henrique Saville."

"Mother of the sainted Moses! She's goin' to commit bigamy on ther masther," groaned Dennis.

"You are silent?" said the woman, after a pause.

"I know not what to say; you astound me."

"Why should I? He is noble, rich, elegant. We will go to France to live and you will be free to marry—"

"Whom?"

"Helen Decatur. I have read your secret, sir."

"We are quits, then. Marry whom you please, so we have nothing more to do with each other," said the man, savagely.

"It's a bargain, then?"

"Yes."

"Then from to-night we are but acquaintances. Now tell me where is the Guide-Scout?"

The man started visibly—the question was so sudden; but recovering himself he said:

"I go in search of him at daybreak."

"Do you expect to find him?"

"I hope to."

"Burt Graham, you are false as I am. I believe you have killed Death-Trailer."

"Why should I?"

"Because you feared him as a rival with Helen Decatur. He has not been seen since he left the fort with you, some two weeks ago. If you return without him I will know at whose door to lay his death."

"Lay it where you please, only keep it to yourself. It is late; suppose we return to the house."

The woman made no reply but glided away from the spot and a moment after the man followed her.

Then Dennis arose from his retreat behind the log, and, raising his hands above his head, he said:

"Howly Moses! I'm so full o' news I'll bu'st."

With rapid steps he retraced his way to the cabin, rushed in, and then in his own peculiar way told his master all that he had heard.

Baron Saville listened attentively to every word, and then said, quietly:

"Keep all you have heard to yourself, Dennis. Now it is nearly day. Get my traps together, for I will accompany Captain Graham in his search to-morrow. And present my compliments in the morning to the colonel and the ladies, and say that I made up mind at a late hour to go with the captain; do you hear?"

"Ivery word, yer honor, an' ther blessed Vargin bring yez back safe."

An hour after the troopers rode forth on their search for Death-Trailer, and at their head were Captain Burt Graham and Baron Henrique Saville.

CHAPTER IX.

THE CAVE VICTIM.

As a cool observer of everything that transpired around him in every-day life, Baron Saville had few equals, and from the moment of his arrival at Fort Helen he became interested in all that took place, though he appeared really indifferent.

He read the characters of those whom he intimately met, and set down Colonel Decatur as an honorable, brave, good-hearted gentleman; Helen as a woman as beautiful in character as she was in face and form, and Lulu as an impulsive young maiden of rare charms, who would one day bud forth into a lovely woman.

Ida Vincent he did not understand, and hence he set to work to solve her, for he felt that she was a puzzle that needed solving, and his attentions to her the worthy Dennis took for love.

Captain Burt Graham was one of the colonel's immediate household that Baron Saville did not like. He felt that there was mischief under the pleasant exterior that the gallant captain always wore.

To study his character better Baron Saville thought of going with the captain on his search after the Guide-Scout, and this intention was carried out after he heard all that Dennis told him of the strange interview between Ida Vincent and Captain Graham.

Side by side the two rode from the fort, and one seeing them together would have thought there were no better friends than Burt Graham and Baron Saville.

But a shadow now fell between them, when the captain signified his intention of going toward the mountain country to prosecute the search.

"Why, captain, if I remember aright you said you left the Guide-Scout on the scene of the massacre, or near it; that will be the place to start from."

"Why should he be there, baron? He expected to follow the trail to the mountains," said Graham, with some impatience.

"Then it is our duty to see if he started on that trail. If we find him dead at the scene of the massacre it will save us a long ride; if not, we can then follow his trail, if it is not obliterated by time."

Burt Graham inwardly cursed Baron Henrique Saville; but, seeing that his men, who had heard the conversation, saw the truth of what he said, he was forced to yield, and did it as graciously as he could.

"Well, baron, as my guest I will yield to you. Come."

At a rapid gallop the troop set off once more, and in an hour's time arrived upon the spot where the ill-fated train had met its doom.

The traces of the struggle there were yet visible, and a search began for any trail leading from the place.

Once there Baron Saville showed his woodcraft, which had brought him unaided from Texas to the northern plains.

Dismounting he examined every trace with a skill that was the admiration not only of the soldiers but of the two prairie-men, the guides of the party, and hunters and trappers.

"Here is where a horse came. See, the rider dismounted here and hitched his steed to this sapling. See, the horse has been gnawing the bark."

"The trail is very faint, but it leads yonder. Ha! look at the top of this ridge. A rifle has rested here. See its indentation in the ground. Now let us see at what it was fired."

With wonderful skill, the guides and soldiers gathered around him, and Baron Saville followed up the clew until it was evident that a man had fired from the little ridge at some one seated or standing a few rods away.

The position of the man fired upon was also found and the tracks all pronounced to be those of the Guide-Scout, for there was a moccasin indentation in the soft ground, with *spur-marks* behind each heel, and the Death-Trailer was known to wear spurs frequently over his moccasins.

"Here are the tracks of his horse. Can any one remember how the Guide-Scout's horse was shod?"

"Yes, sir, I remember his hoof-mark. I have often followed Death-Trailer on the trail. It was a long, narrow hoof—a peculiar shape. Yes, this is the stallion's track."

"Now we will follow it up; but where is Captain Graham?" demanded the baron.

"He is searching another part of the field, sir," said a soldier.

"Call him, and tell him we are on the right track. Come, we can strike the trail now at a run."

The superior knowledge shown by the baron, and perhaps his rank, caused the guides to yield to him, and he led the way swiftly over the very path taken by Death-Trailer some two weeks before.

Into the gorge the party turned, up the narrow ravine, and then into the cavern.

Then they started back; they were in the presence of the remains of the dead!

And remains only they were, for, torn into fragments, the bones gnawed clean was all that had once been a human being.

The buck-skin suit, the moccasins, the slouch hat were all there, but so torn into pieces as to be unrecognizable almost. The wolves and coyotes had done their work well.

"Good God! can this be all that is left of that noble fellow?" said the baron, feelingly.

"I guesses as how it are. He was a large man, an' these is large bones; 'sides, I thinks I recognize his buck-skins; but whar is his shoot-in'-irons?" said one of the guides.

"That we must find out. Now to bury these bones. Dig a hole there, boys; but where is Captain Graham?"

Captain Graham was sent for, and in a few moments put in an appearance, his face strangely pale.

"Captain, we have found what we believe to be the remains of the Guide-Scout. He was, is my theory, wounded down in the valley by some one who fired upon him from the ridge, upon which we found the mark of where a rifle had rested."

"He came here, and unable to get away died in this cave. See, here is a piece of buck-skin legging that, the boys say, looks like those worn by the Guide-Scout," and stooping the baron picked it up.

A cry at once arose from all; beneath it lay a revolver.

"It's Death-Trailer's weepin! I'd know it in heevin," cried one of the guides.

"Yes, it is one of his revolvers," averred the sergeant.

"Then there can be little doubt but that the brave scout is indeed dead. Now to follow up the clew," said the baron, and while the remains were being buried a closer search was instituted, which resulted in finding another track leading to the cave, but not away from it further than to the scout's steed, for the place where the animal stood was plainly marked.

"Well, it is evident that some one else has been here, and he has taken the Guide-Scout's rifle and traps with him, and finding the horse has ridden him off. Is not that your idea, Captain Graham?"

"Yes, baron, yes; the scout is dead—of course he must be; for, how could he be alive when you have found his remains?"

Baron Saville looked up to see if the captain was trying to perpetrate a joke at such a time; Captain Graham's face was earnest and deathly pale, and Baron Saville said nothing more then; but he called the sergeant aside and asked:

"You were with the troop that came here before, sergeant?"

"Yes, sir."

"And as soon as you left the scout you went directly back to the fort?"

"Yes, sir; or, that is, we went back a mile or two and then halted for an hour or so."

"Why did you halt, sergeant?"

"To graze the horses, sir."

"And for the captain and all to take a nap, eh?"

"Yes, sir; we did take a snooze—but the captain he went off for a little hunt, sir, and brought in an antelope."

"Aha! Well, sergeant, I suppose you think the poor Guide-Scout is dead?"

"I'm sorry to believe it, sir, he was such a fine gentleman, if he did wear buck-skins."

"Yes, sergeant, he was a noble man. Now we must return and follow the trail of the black stallion."

The torn remnants of manhood were soon consigned to a hastily-dug grave, and then the whole party started again on the trail, the baron leading.

The peculiar hoof-track of the Guide-Scout's horse was easily followed, in spite of the time that had gone by since the impressions were made, and at a swift trot the troopers continued on until they came to the mountain side.

Here, in a small stream, the trail was lost, and though the search was continued for hours it was useless; the tracks could not be found again.

With reluctance upon the part of the baron and the troopers the search was given up and the party went into camp for the night.

With the early dawn they started upon the return to the fort, and arriving, Captain Graham made his report to Colonel Decatur; they had found the remains of Death-Trailer and buried them. Some foe had taken the brave man at a disadvantage and shot him down.

CHAPTER X.

A GIRL'S GRIEF.

It was a sad blow to Colonel Decatur when told of the death of Death-Trailer, for he loved the man as he would have loved a younger brother, and could not bear to think of him as dead. The great Guide-Scout, who had been victorious in a hundred battles, who had never met his equal, to be shot down by some cowardly assassin was terrible to think of.

But, if he sorrowed deeply himself for the scout, Colonel Decatur was wholly unprepared for the scene that met his gaze when he entered the room of Helen to tell her of the sad termination of the search.

His daughter lay upon the bed in an agony of grief, Lulu, who had told her all, seated by her side in an endeavor to console her.

"Great heavens! has it come to this? Helen, speak! Tell me, is it for Radcliffe you grieve so?" cried Colonel Decatur, anxiously.

"Oh, father, he is dead—they say he is dead, and I shall never see him any more," cried Helen, throwing herself upon her father's breast, and giving way to a torrent of tears.

"Yes, Helen, he is dead; but you must calm yourself, my daughter, for it must not be known outside that you loved him so deeply. Tell me, child, was there aught between you and Radcliffe?"

"No, father; I loved him, but he did not know it. He was so noble, father."

"Poor child! I feel for you from my inmost heart; but for my sake, let no one know of this. You, Lulu, will not speak of Helen's grief, will you, child?"

"Colonel Decatur!" and the young girl drew herself proudly up and her eyes flashed.

"Forgive me, Lulu; I spoke from anxiety for my child," said Colonel Decatur, earnestly.

"I do forgive you, sir; now leave Helen to me; I will care for her, and comfort her all in my power," and Lulu, who, in her becoming feminine attire, looked the beautiful girl she was, put her arms around Helen and drew her gently away.

Feeling that he could trust the young maiden, Colonel Decatur turned sadly away and left the room.

Then Helen looked up, her tears gone.

"Lulu, you are a darling; but oh, that father should have seen me grieve! I wished my secret buried in the grave with him—hidden from all eyes."

"And yet, I knew that you loved him, Helen, though I saw you together but once—the evening I came, when I awoke and found you all standing by and looking at me. Oh! was I not ashamed?"

"Then you have shown to me often that you loved him, and I could not blame you, for I loved him too; but not as you love him, Helen; mine is different, for I could have seen you marry him and not have been jealous."

"And now he is forever gone—poor me, poor me!" moaned Helen.

"Yes, you have a deep grief at your heart, Helen; but so have I; you do not forget how I have suffered. We are sisters in sorrow, Helen."

"You beautiful, noble girl," and Helen Decatur threw her arms around the neck of the maiden, and kissed her again and again.

At length she said:

"Lulu, have you the courage to do something for me?"

"Try me."

"It will take all your nerve, child."

"Try me."

"Well, I *must* go and see his grave, and I wish you to go with me; will you go?"

"Yes."

"Bless you, Lulu; but we must go alone. I have two splendid horses, and I know that you ride well."

"Yes, I have ridden all my life. When shall we go, Helen?"

"This afternoon. It is about twenty miles, and it will be a very hard ride there and back."

"I don't care; I would go alone to visit that place, for, not only does he rest there now, Helen, but you remember my poor mother is buried there," and the pearly tears dimmed the dark-blue eyes.

"Poor child! We have indeed our griefs together. Now I will give word to have the horses saddled," and bathing her face, to hide the traces of grief, and controlling her feelings, Helen went out and gave the order to the orderly to have the horses ready in half an hour.

"Yes, miss, and shall I accompany you?"

"No, orderly; we will go alone for a gallop."

At the appointed time the horses were at the door, and the two maidens dashed from the fort, but not without several warnings from officers and soldiers not to go far.

Both girls were well mounted. Their steeds were, as Helen had said, splendid horses, and they flew over the prairies much of the time at a speed of ten miles an hour.

It was a long ride, but the distance was made in three hours, Helen acting as guide, for the massacre had occurred near the spot which she knew well, as a picnic party from the fort had once passed the day there.

"It will be dark an hour before we get back, Lulu; but I do not care; I *will* see his grave," said Helen, as they drew near the spot.

"Yes, yonder tree I remember. It was there we camped that fatal night," cried Lulu, and she urged her horse into a run, and soon drew rein upon the spot where was made one large grave, beneath which rested the remains of all those who had fallen in the slaughter.

Throwing herself from her horse, Lulu knelt by the side of the grave and burst into tears.

For a moment Helen Decatur regarded her sadly—the tears in her own eyes; then she turned her horse away, and, guided by the information she had questioned out of the sergeant, she started in search of the grave of Death-Trailer.

A multitude of tracks led that way and guided her over the same path which he had taken—into the gorge, up the narrow ravine, to the

cave, by the side of which was the new-made mound.

With a groan of grief, wrung from her inmost heart, Helen Decatur sprang to the ground, and started toward the grave.

Another instant and she would have thrown herself in an abandon of sorrow upon it, but a huge form suddenly confronted her, standing upright in the mouth of the cavern.

It was not the form of a man, but of a beast—a huge bear of the mountains, his hairy arms outstretched, his mouth open, and his eyes gleaming.

Helen gave one shriek of terror and started back toward her horse.

But the steed had already caught sight of the monster, and with a neigh of fright wheeled and dashed down the gorge, leaving poor Helen helpless before the now enraged brute.

In vain did she strive to fly—her knees yielded, and she sunk down upon the earth, unable to move, and gazing wildly upon the huge bear, not a dozen paces from her.

She was armed with a small revolver, yet she had not strength to use it, and felt that she must die a horrible death, torn limb from limb by those huge glittering teeth, those long, sharp claws.

Seeing the helplessness of his victim, the bear gave a growl of satisfaction, and lowering himself upon all fours began to move slowly toward her.

With one glance to the bright blue skies above her, one long look at the grave so near her, and a muttered prayer, Helen closed her eyes, and felt that the hour of her death had come.

CHAPTER XI.

THE DEATH-STRUGGLE.

WHEN Helen Decatur closed her eyes, with a prayer upon her lips, she gave up all for lost; she believed that the end had come—a fearful end for even a brute to die.

But a savage growl of the bear caused her to suddenly open her eyes; the impulse was inevitable.

She saw that the bear had again risen upon his hind-feet, and that he was not regarding her was evident.

What could it be? Was poor Lulu coming to also meet a terrible death?

No; a rapid footstep was heard behind her, yet she was unable to turn. Then came several rapid shots over her head, as she crouched prone upon the earth, and a tall form bounded far above her head, and with a cry that mingled with the fierce growl of the bear, sprung between her and danger.

One glance at that tall form, and Helen Decatur uttered a shriek that echoed far down the gorge; then she fell forward upon her face in a swoon.

How long she remained unconscious she never knew; but when she again opened her eyes they met a desperate scene.

A man of tall form, with blood-stained face and hands, with torn clothing, was writhing, struggling, fighting for life with the huge monster of the mountains.

The ground was blood-stained, and torn up as though by a plow, the hairy coat of the bear was seamed with gashes, its jaws red with gore, its eyes inflamed and glaring.

Both man and beast seemed dying, yet fighting on, with undying fury. Which would be the victor 'twere hard to tell.

In vain did Helen strive to rise and give what aid she could with her small revolver; one glance into that blood-stained, stern face turned toward her, and again she fainted away.

Once more her eyes opened and the scene had changed—the desperate fight had ended.

Her gaze first fell upon the bear, lying dead, only a few feet from her; then she heard a well-known voice. It said earnestly:

"Helen, oh Helen! *he is not dead!*"

It was Lulu's voice, and with a mighty effort at mastery Helen Decatur sprang to her feet.

There, in the mouth of the cavern sat Lulu, holding in her lap the head of a man, while with her handkerchief she wiped the blood from his face.

"Helen, he is not dead," again repeated Lulu.

With a bound Helen was by her side, and with a low cry she murmured:

"Thank God! the grave has given up its dead! I saw him, Lulu, and I thought it was his spirit come to aid me—but oh how white he is, and how hard he breathes!"

"Yes, he is sorely wounded, and needs all our aid. There, hold his head while I run to the stream after water."

Helen obeyed and Lulu darted away, to soon return with a canteen of water and a flask of brandy. She had found the scout's horse hitched in the gorge.

With skillful hands Lulu dressed the wounds of the Guide-Scout, and as she did so, told Helen how she had come upon the scene, having followed her trail up the valley, just as the combat ended, and the man staggered back, and fell, after his last knife-thrust into the body of the bear.

"At first I was terribly frightened, for I thought both you and your preserver were

dead; then I got ashamed of my fears, and seeing you had only fainted, I went to him.

"Helen, I gave a shriek of joy that woke up every wolf and bird in these old hills, when I saw it was my guardian, and I at once set to work to do what I could for him; then you revived and I was doubly glad; but see, he is returning to consciousness."

The Trailer's lips moved, and he muttered some words in a low tone; but both maidens heard them, low as was the voice.

"Helen, are you safe?"

Those were the words he uttered, and the heart of Helen Decatur gave one great throb of joy.

"Lulu, what is to be done? We cannot move him, for he is too badly injured to ride," and Helen seemed troubled; and no wonder, for it was getting late; an hour more and it would be dark.

"If you are not afraid to stay with him, I will ride to the fort for aid," said Lulu, boldly.

"I will stay—I will do anything to save his life, Lulu."

"Then I will start at once for the fort—Ha!"

The ejaculation of Lulu caused Helen to glance quickly up, and her eyes fell upon a man approaching.

"It is the baron," cried Lulu, with delight, and she rushed forward to meet him.

"Oh, I am so glad you have come—*so glad!*"

"This welcome, Miss Lulu, is worth a long ride, and much anxiety, after two fair run-aways; but there has been trouble here," said the baron.

"Yes, and is now; but come, Death-Trailer is not dead—"

"Not dead! thank God!"

"No, but he is badly wounded. See that bear," and as they ascended the hill Lulu pointed to the huge monster.

"What does it all mean, Miss Lulu?" said the baron, mystified.

"It means that we came here to—never mind; I came to visit my mother's grave, and when Helen was here alone that bear attacked her, and suddenly a man ran forward and boldly fought the monster, and that man was my brave guardian! Yonder he lies."

The baron stepped quickly forward, greeted Helen hastily, and bent anxiously over the wounded man.

With a surgeon's skill he examined the different wounds, the maidens watching him nervously.

Then he said, in a tone of relief:

"It was a desperate struggle, and he has fainted from fatigue and loss of blood together. He has some ugly wounds about the breast, arms and legs, but none dangerous, and he will soon be all right. See, he is recovering consciousness now."

Slowly the Trailer showed signs of returning sensibility; and while dressing his wounds the baron said, pleasantly:

"You will have to thank my servant Dennis, young ladies, for my intrusion upon you, for he came to me and said you had gone off alone, and 'bint on some divilment,' he expressed it. Knowing how dangerous it was for you to be alone, I mounted my horse, took your trail, and here I am."

"And thank God you are here!" cried Helen, fervently.

"Yes, it is best as it turns out. Well, Radcliffe, old fellow, how do you feel?"

The Guide-Scout opened his eyes and they met those of the baron; then they turned upon Lulu, and then upon Helen.

As he caught her eyes a slight color came into his face, and he murmured:

"Thank Heaven, I was in time to save you from harm! It was a hard fight, Saville—the hardest of my life."

"I don't doubt it, Trailer; but come, take a swallow of this, and see if you can shake yourself together, for it is growing late, and is a long way to the fort."

"Oh, yes, I feel better. In a few days I will be all right. Come, let us be off; but what are you all doing here?" and, with an effort of his strong will, the scout rose to his feet, though it was evident that it caused him great pain.

To his question the baron made no reply, and Helen also remained silent; but Lulu spoke out:

"You remember, that you promised to bring me to see my mother's grave, and as you were supposed to be dead, Helen came with me."

"I was supposed to be dead? What do you mean, Lulu?"

The baron answered for her:

"Why, hearing nothing from you since Graham left you here, Colonel Decatur sent out a search-party, and a torn body found in this cave was supposed to be yours, as I tracked where a man had evidently been shot, or shot at, in the valley below."

"There is the grave of the poor fellow, and I suppose, feeling deeply for you, as they were here, the ladies wished to see where you were buried. My presence here is on account of my having trailed these runaways, on learning that they had come off alone."

"And I was thought dead?" said the scout, slowly, and he turned his gaze upon Helen, who

to hide the blush that arose to her face replied, quickly:

"Yes, and I thought a spirit had come to my aid when I recognized your form and face as you rushed upon the bear. Oh! how terrible that struggle!" and Helen shuddered at the remembrance.

"But who can it be that is buried here? One of your pistols was found near him," said the baron.

"I will tell you as we ride back to the fort. Come, let us start."

"Let me get the horses, and you await me here. Your steed, Miss Helen, I caught down the gorge as I came up," and the baron departed, but soon returned with the animals.

With some difficulty the Trailer mounted, but once in the saddle he said he was all right, and the party started at a slow pace for the fort.

CHAPTER XII. THE SCOUT'S STORY.

TRUE to his word, as they rode along on the way to the fort, and in spite of his severe sufferings, Death-Trailer told all about his adventure in the valley, the shot from the ambushade at him, and how nearly it proved fatal, and of his finding Nick Dawson in the cave.

"Now what I make known to you I wish you never to mention, as I am on a trail that I think will result in good for this part of the frontier. It is the following this trail that has kept me absent for some time."

"And caused us all to mourn you as dead—your naughty man!" said Lulu.

"I guess there were not many tears shed, Lulu."

"I'll not tell you whether there was or not."

"Then I will believe as I please in the matter, as to the tears; but to return to my story: I found Nick Dawson nearly dead from starvation, wounded, and bound hand and foot.

"Releasing him, I gave him food, and he told me how he had been forced to join a band of desperadoes on the border, from having accidentally run into their camp one day, and that to save his life he had become one of them; but his heart was not in the work, as I well know, for he was a good fellow, though a little wild—you remember him, Miss Decatur—the young trapper who often visited the fort?"

"Yes; he was about your size, and did not look unlike you."

"Yes, that was the man; well, these renegades found out that a train was coming, and with most of them disguised as Sioux Indians, they attacked it, and we all know the sad result."

"Then, because Nick would not join the massacre, the devils wounded him, then carried him to the cavern, bound him hand and foot, and left him to starve; thus I found him; but learning from him where their mountain camp was situated, and anxious to spot every man of the party, I left Nick some provisions, one of my pistols, and started upon the trail of the renegades."

"Poor fellow, he doubtless got worse after my departure, or, in his weak state, unable to protect himself, was attacked by wolves and torn to pieces. It was his body you doubtless buried, baron."

"Yes, there can be no doubt of it. What a terrible death for the poor fellow to die," said the baron, with feeling.

"Terrible indeed; but I thought he would be able to reach the fort by the next day; I am sorry I left him, yet it could not be helped."

"Did you find the camp of the robbers?" asked Helen, as if anxious to turn the scout's thoughts from the sad remembrance.

"Oh, yes, and I have some thirty men marked for the bullet or the gallows; but to find their chief is what I am most anxious to do."

"Who he is I cannot discover, and that he does not remain in camp with them I am confident; yet who he is, is the question."

"I hung about the camp for days, and at night got almost into it—in fact, so near that I heard their conversation, and I believe that the chief lives in Decatur City; is, in fact, a gambler there; but whoever he may be, I will trail the mystery to the end."

While the Guide-Scout and his three companions were returning to the fort, there was in that stockade outpost the greatest excitement.

Colonel Decatur had returned from an afternoon ride to the town, and discovered that his daughter and Lulu were missing.

He at once made inquiries, and to his surprise and terror learned that they had gone off together on horseback, and without an escort.

It was now some time after dark, and as they had not returned he dreaded the worst.

But here Dennis came to his relief, and told him that his master had gone after them, starting half an hour after they left the fort.

This greatly relieved the colonel's mind, for he knew that the baron was a thorough prairie-man, and as brave as a lion; and he hoped that the three would soon return.

But, as it grew later and later, and they still did not appear, he grew so anxious that he ordered Captain Graham to report to his room, and call out his troop for the march.

At this moment the party rode up, and the

sentinel in dismay recognized the scout, whom he had believed to be in his grave.

"Where is my father, sentinel?" asked Helen of the startled soldier.

"In his room, miss, with Captain Graham. The troopers is ordered out to go in search of you."

"There is no need of it; we have all returned. Gentlemen, we will see you in the morning; and, Mr. Radcliffe, if there is anything that you need, anything that I can do, do not hesitate to let me know."

"Thank you, Miss Decatur," replied the scout, and Lulu and Helen ran into their cabin, while the baron said:

"Come, Radcliffe, I wish you to come with me," and he almost dragged Death-Trailer into the head-quarters room.

Facing the floor with quick steps, Colonel Decatur was there, giving orders in his terse tones to Captain Graham, who was booted and spurred for a ride.

"Ho, baron, you are back! and the girls?" cried Colonel Decatur, catching sight of Saville.

"Are all safe, and so is the—"

But a cry of terror interrupted him from the lips of Captain Graham, while an exclamation of surprise came from the lips of the colonel.

"Good God! scout, is it really you, or your ghost?"

"It is I, Colonel Decatur, in flesh and blood. The rumor of my death was a false one, as you see."

"And gladly I welcome you back," and Colonel Decatur grasped the hand of the Guide-Scout.

"Permit me, also, to congratulate Mr. Radcliffe. His unexpected appearance startled me strangely," and Burt Graham stepped forward.

"But you are ill—you are scarred up and wounded! Come, you must have rest, and tell us all about it another time. Call the surgeon, Graham," and Colonel Decatur and the baron led the scout into an adjoining room, where he sunk down upon a bed, for he was suffering greatly and very weak.

The surgeon soon arrived, and the wounds of the Trailer were properly dressed, after which he sunk into a deep sleep.

Then Colonel Decatur sought Helen's room. She expected him and was awaiting his coming.

After the greeting was over the colonel said, quietly:

"Now, Helen, tell me what all this means."

"I will, father—I will tell you all," and Helen told how she had desired to see the grave of the Death-Trailer, and had urged Lulu to accompany her.

"Does the Guide-Scout know of this, Helen?"

"He knows only that I went with Lulu to see where her mother was buried, and being near the spot we might see his grave, too."

"I am glad, Helen; I do not wish you to appear unmaidenly."

"Nor will I, father."

Then Helen told the whole story as it had occurred, and when she had finished he drew her to his heart, and said:

"Helen, I don't wonder that you love that man; but you must be careful."

"Though he seems all that is noble and good, we yet know nothing regarding him. His past life is a sealed book to us all, and here he may wear a mask to conceal from us some deep mystery connected with his life."

"Beware, my daughter, beware!"

Helen promised; but what girl ever attempted to stem the tide of love when once it began to flow upon her heart?

She could not resist the impulse that made her love this unknown man, and during his illness, which lasted for weeks, she was his most faithful nurse.

Her father watched her with jealous eye, and hoped all would yet come well; but at his heart was a dread of coming evil.

CHAPTER XIII. THE EAVESDROPPER.

THE wounds of Death-Trailer proved to be more serious than he had believed, and it was weeks ere he was able to get out again.

In the time of his illness the military affairs at Fort Helen had jogged along as usual, with an occasional expedition after renegades, a battle with hostile red-skins, and the usual adventures of a frontier post.

But, in the interval, affairs had somewhat changed.

To explain: though ever most polite to Ida Vincent, the baron appeared to have lost his heart with Lulu, and was unhappy, apparently, unless in her society.

Now this was a sharp thorn in the side of Ida Vincent, and in her lonely hours she smarted under it terribly; but in public she seemed wholly indifferent and smiled upon the baron and Lulu as sweetly as ever.

Then there certainly did seem to be a love affair going on between the handsome Guide-Scout and the colonel's daughter, and the officers and officers' wives at Fort Helen were wondering continually if the commandant was blind to it, or whether he intended to allow it to go on.

Upon this point, however, Colonel Decatur held his own counsel.

But there was one whom this state of affairs drove almost mad, and that one was Captain Burt Graham, who had determined that Helen should be his prize.

Hence both the worthy captain and his unrecognized wife, Ida Vincent, caring nothing for each other, but, on the contrary, hating each other, were plotting and planning to commit sin to accomplish their ends.

One afternoon, until the sun went down behind the distant mountains, Burt Graham and Ida Vincent were upon the river-bank, plotting together, while Dennis, watching them from a distance, was mentally cursing them for not meeting after dark, that he might have a chance to indulge his tastes at eavesdropping.

"Then, after all this talk, you have decided upon nothing?" asked the woman.

"Only that I want the scout out of the way, and you feel likewise about the girl."

"Why don't you get rid of the scout?"

"Tried that once—took deliberate aim at thirty paces, and, curse him, it merely knocked him over, and I, believing him dead, was nearly frightened out of my wits by his reappearance."

"Coward! I should have been a man," sneered the woman.

"I wish to God you had been."

"This is nonsense—this palaver; the scout is but a man, and powder and ball, or a sharp knife in a strong hand, will do the work."

"Yes, my sweet Borgia, it will; only it wouldn't be very healthy for the man who made the attempt if there was a missfire, or the steel turned on a bone."

"Risk nothing, gain nothing, Captain Graham."

"Why in the fiend's name don't you settle the girl, then?" angrily said the man.

"I intend to."

"How?"

"Upon the method I have not yet determined; but go, I wish to be alone with my thoughts. Bad as they are, they are better society than your company."

"I obey," and with mock politeness the soldier raised his plumed hat and strode away just as darkness came on.

But there was gloom only for a few moments, for above the horizon soared the full moon, lighting up the scene with silvery beauty.

Then in the moonlight Ida Vincent caught the sight of a white dress, coming toward the spot where she stood.

Should she remain and await the coming of Helen? for she knew that it must be she.

No, she would return to the house; and she started to carry this intention into execution, when she suddenly sprang back into the shadow of the tree, and sought a hiding-place behind the log that Dennis had so longed to beat, in the afternoon.

The cause of this strange move on her part was at discovering that Helen was not alone; no, she leaned upon the arm of Radcliffe, the Guide-Scout.

Slowly the two approached the river-bank, and then halted in the moonlight, gazing silently out upon the gliding waters.

For a moment they stood thus in silence, and then the beautiful eavesdropper heard the old, old story of love breathed into the listening ear of Helen Decatur—nay, heard the maiden's answer—that she had loved the Guide from the first moment she had met him.

Then the two turned away and retraced their steps toward the cabins, and Ida Vincent ground her teeth and hissed:

"He was my game until that titled foreigner came; then I gave him up for rank and wealth, and, oh God! I may lose both—nay, my own soul, too!"

"But how it crushed me to hear him tell her he loved her—him whom I yet love—ha! who comes there?"

Eagerly she strained her eyes out upon the sloping hillside, and a bitter curse arose to her lips as she recognized two persons approaching—they were Baron Saville and Lulu.

Down, down she shrunk behind the log and waited their coming.

As though led by the little god Cupid, they came to the very spot where a few minutes before Radcliffe had told his love to Helen Decatur.

Again the listening woman heard a story of love from the lips of man; again she listened to a woman's answer where her whole heart was the man's at her side.

Again she saw them turn away—saw a warm kiss imprinted upon the ripe, red lips of Lulu, and then sunk down in an agony of passion.

How long she remained there she did not know; but she was brought somewhat rudely to herself by a heavy fall upon her.

From her lips issued a cry of terror.

From other lips came the following:

"Oh, Mither of Moses an' ther twilve aposels—ef I hav'n't kilt ther leddy."

"Fool! what are you doing here?" cried Ida, angrily, recovering from her fright.

"I was s'ated upon ther log, my leddy, an' was afther dropping off inter forty winks of

slape, an' dreaming ther divil was near me, I awoke an' tumbled over backward onto yer swate silf."

"Yes, I lay down myself to enjoy the balmy evening, and must have dropped off to sleep. Good-night, Dennis! Don't mention our mishap here, or they will all laugh at me," and a gold coin found its way into the Irishman's palm.

"Niver, me leddy, niver," said Dennis; but he thought:

"What a desateful thing it is! Why, she's crouched down there this blissed hour list'nin' to the Trailer and Miss Helen, an' ther masther an' Miss Lulie."

"An' thin, when I see'd yonder spalpeen comin', an' thinks he was afther meetin' her ag'in, an' rushes here to be afther hidin', why I jist tumbles over her, an' howly Moses! I was as badly skeert as I skeert her."

"Oho, they is stopped now, an' is afther talkin' together! She's a-tellin' him I'm afther bein' here—yis, that's it, for he's afther goin' back wid her. Now I must go an' till the masther phat I've diskivered."

So saying Dennis went rapidly to the cabin where his master dwelt, and in a short while Baron Saville was in possession of the mortifying intelligence that Ida Vincent had heard his words of love to Lulu.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE INDIAN LOVER.

AMONG those who now and then came to Fort Helen, was a young Cheyenne chief, who had been friendly to the whites, and urged peace between the pale-faces and red-skins; but who, nevertheless, in battle, had proven a most deadly foe and won the admiration of his tribe.

This young chief's name was, when translated into English, Red Willow, and few men of any race were his equal in physical beauty, while so perfect were his features that many believed him to be a half-breed, in spite of his dark-red skin.

In his Indian way Red Willow was considerable of a dandy—wore the best buck-skin, the finest-worked moccasins, and the gayest head-dress, while he carried a rifle and revolvers presented to him by Major Vincent, the father of Ida, for saving his life on several occasions when the major was at war with the young chief's tribe.

From the first time he had seen Ida the Red Willow had loved her, and he was deaf to the songs and beauty of the red-skin maidens, who could never charm him, charm they ever so wisely.

To his love for her Ida had to thank herself for many beautiful trophies of the hunt and chase, for yards of the finest-dressed buck-skin, moccasins worked by the best squaw artists, and many fancy little presents.

Now this admiration of the Red Willow was not at all distasteful to Ida Vincent; she was rather proud of it, and in many little ways returned the kindnesses of the handsome young chief, until she had been often laughed at for encouraging her Indian beau, as her friends called the red-skinned lover.

Thus it was that Red Willow, after Ida went to live at Fort Helen, was wont to continue his visits, coming several times a year and always bringing presents with him for his pale-face lady-love.

After returning from the river-bank, where she had had her *contretemps* with Dennis, Ida learned with considerable show of delight that Red Willow was in the fort.

"Bring him to my parlor, orderly," she said, and entering the cabin she carefully looked into the adjoining rooms to see that no one was in there.

The next instant Red Willow entered, and with a stately pace worthy of a society man, saluted the maiden.

"I am glad to see the Red Willow," said Ida, in his own tongue, for having been raised upon the frontier she spoke the several Indian languages well.

"The heart of the Red Willow is glad. His eyes are brighter when they see the pale-face maiden—the daughter of the Red Willow's friend," answered the Indian.

"I know that the Red Willow was the friend of my father; is he still my friend?"

"Would the Red Willow lie? Is his tongue forked? Does he not have the white maiden in his heart as a bird in a cage? Would he not make his wigwam bright if she would but live there?"

Ida did not stop to answer these conundrums, but shortly said:

"Let the Red Willow know that I care for him; but the Great Spirit has said that there shall be no wigwam for me—that I must remain as I now am, and I bow to the will of the Great Spirit, as the Red Willow must also do."

"The Red Willow has heard; his heart is desolate; he will droop as does the red willow on the hillside," sadly said the Indian.

"No; the Red Willow must be a man; there is work for him to do. I will it so, for the Great Spirit has said that it must be."

"Let the maiden speak; the ears of the Red Willow are open."

"The Red Willow shall hear all; he shall hear

how the Great Spirit directed me in a dream to find for him a fair pale-face maiden to share his wigwam and make his heart glad. Does the Red Willow hear?"

"His ears are open," laconically replied the Indian.

"Then he shall hear my dream, and he shall do as the Great Spirit directs. Let him come near."

The Indian approached and gazed straight into the maiden's eyes, while she talked to him for some minutes in a low tone, soft, sweet and fascinating.

When she ceased his eyes were ablaze with a strange light, and turning, he strode from the room, these words upon his lips:

"The Red Willow will remember!"

CHAPTER XV.

LOST LULU.

SEVERAL days passed after the Indian chief's visit to Ida Vincent, and yet not by look or action had she shown to either Helen or Lulu that she knew the secret of their hearts—the one thing that made their smiles so bright.

One afternoon, when the sun was near its setting, Ida Vincent entered Lulu's room and said, pleasantly:

"Come, Lulu, let us take a short and rapid gallop upon the prairie."

"Is there not danger, Ida?"

"Nonsense; we will not go far. Come."

Lulu at once yielded, and a few moments after the two girls were dashing along toward a distant bluff, to see the sun set beyond the mountains.

Reaching the bluff they sat gazing upon the scene of beauty before them until the sun went down, and then they turned to go; but like magic there sprung up around them a score of dusky forms, with hideous painted faces, and they found themselves cut off from escape.

"Use your whip and come on! Ride through them!" cried Ida, and under the lash her horse bounded forward, and striking right and left she seemed literally to cut her way through the line of red-men.

In the meantime Lulu only used her whip to strike her horse a sharp blow, and then drawing the little revolver she always carried when she left the fort, she fired full in the face of the first Indian who caught at her rein.

With a wild war-cry the savage fell back dead, and the now thoroughly frightened and maddened horse bounded on.

But, other strong hands seized his bit; an iron grasp was upon the little revolver, and Lulu was a prisoner to the red-skins, while Ida Vincent broke through the lines.

One glance Lulu turned as a mounted warrior wheeled alongside of her, and she beheld a horseman coming on at full speed.

"Henrique! Henrique! save me!" she cried in piercing tones, and then like the wind she was borne away; but not until she saw the baron meet Ida, exchange a hasty word with her, and then dash directly into the Indian ranks.

She heard rapid firing, wild war-whoops, several death-cries, and then all was silent, and like the wind came the band of warriors behind them, flying from that single horseman.

But in vain the desperate courage of Baron Saville. He could not overtake those who held poor Lulu captive, and though he shot down several red-skins, and drove the others to flight, his horse was badly wounded and he was forced to relinquish the chase.

With a sad heart he rejoined Ida Vincent, who was wringing her hands and weeping at the loss of Lulu, and the two started upon their return to the fort, for it was now dark.

"It was imprudent, Miss Vincent, to venture out without an escort. As soon as Dennis told me you had done so, I followed you; but I shall follow those red devils to their den and tear poor Lulu from them."

"Can you follow their trail to-night?" asked Ida, anxiously.

"Yes, when the moon rises, and I shall have the experience and aid of the Death-Trailer."

"He is not at the fort, I am sorry to say; he left this morning on a scout, he said; but his acts are so mysterious that one does not know how to construe him."

"Surely, Miss Vincent, you have no doubt of Radcliffe, I hope?" said the baron, in surprise.

"He is a mysterious man, Baron Saville, and I hate mystery."

"I should judge so; but I will wager my life on that man; but here we are at the stockade. Permit me to aid you to dismount."

While Ida, with another burst of grief, rushed to tell Helen of the capture of poor Lulu, Baron Saville sought Colonel Decatur and made known the sad circumstance.

"By Heaven! this is horrible, and within two miles of the fort you say, Brown?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then these devils shall receive a severe punishment. Cheyennes, you say they were?"

"Yes, sir, disguised as Sioux, for I looked closely at those killed."

"And the brave girl shot one down, you say?"

"Yes, sir—I saw her fire in his face and the

Indian fell. Miss Vincent boldly rode through the line, lashing right and left with her whip."

"I am glad that she escaped, and feel deeply for poor Lulu. She has already seen so much sorrow, poor child; but I will order Graham to take his own and Taylor's company and start in pursuit, and Death-Trailer shall guide them."

"The scout is away, colonel."

"Ah, I forgot; he went off on a matter he is working up. One of the other guides shall go."

"I will go as guide, sir. I am not a stranger to wood and prairie craft, as you know."

"True—none better; when will you start?"

"Within the hour."

"Good! I will order out the troopers," and while Colonel Decatur went to give the order, Baron Saville sought his room to prepare for the march.

"Well, Dennis, I suppose you have heard the bad news?" he said, as that worthy met him at the door.

"Yis, Masther Hinrique, bad luck to ivery 'tarnil red-skin this side o' the Rockies! But, phat is yer goin' to do about it, sir?"

"I start at once in pursuit, so hasten to get my traps in readiness."

"Am I to go wid yer?"

"No, you remain here, and keep your eye upon that woman."

"I'll do it, sur—ef I could be afther knowin' a rason fur it, sur, I'd say she was at the bottom o' this divilment."

"No, Dennis, you wrong her this time. I saw the Indians make the attack upon the ladies, and Miss Vincent boldly rode through their line. I wish that it had been Lulu instead."

"An' so do I, sur; but I'll watch her close, sur, an' sarcumvint her ef I can, but it's hard work to sarcumvint a famale woman, Masther Hinrique."

"You found that out in Texas, I believe, Dennis?" said the baron, with a smile.

"Be'asy now, Masther Hinrique, ef yez plaze; but thruth for ye, I *did* find it out wid that same little saynoriter, bad luck to her, to be leadin' me on, an' 'avin' a husband all the time, an' whin I tumbled him out o' ther winder o' his own house, thinkin' he was a thafe o' ther world, she come at me wid a stillety, an' druv me clane out o' the place—bad luck to her; but the thrumpeter is blowin' boots and saddles, sur, as though he was afther blowin' out his brains this blissed minit."

"Good-by, Dennis. If harm befalls me you know my instructions. Good-by," and Baron Saville left the cabin armed from head to foot, for he felt that he was going on a desperate service.

CHAPTER XVI.

TRAILING WITH A SHADOW.

As the baron was hastening toward his horse, for the troopers were already in the saddle, a pleasant voice said:

"Baron Saville, can I see you just one moment?"

With a bow the baron followed Ida Vincent into the little parlor reserved for the household of Colonel Decatur.

Closing the door behind them, Ida said, in an earnest manner:

"Pardon me, Baron Saville, if I cast suspicion upon one whom you deem your friend; but I feel that my duty compels me not to let you go blindly forth upon this search, when I hold the facts that will throw light upon the affair of this afternoon."

"I must confess that I do not understand, Miss Vincent."

"Then I will explain. I believe that Radcliffe the Guide kidnapped poor Lulu."

"Great God! Miss Vincent, be careful of what you say."

"I am careful; but I firmly believe it."

"But, what cause could there be for it?"

"The best reason in the world—his love for her."

"Nonsense! The girl is his ward, acknowledged so by every one."

"Yet guardians sometimes love wards."

"True; but I have reason to believe he is interested elsewhere."

"So I thought; but I have changed my mind."

"That he loves the girl I believe and hope; but, that it is otherwise than as a guardian should love his ward I deny."

"Yet it is true; he was the one that kidnapped her."

"But *Indians* did that—I saw them—you saw them—I killed three, and Lulu shot one, and certainly there was no make-believe in those that fell. I am too old a frontiersman, Miss Vincent, to be fooled that way."

"Yet he knows all the tribes well—he could easily have arranged to bear Lulu off."

"But, why should he?"

"Can you not answer that question, baron?"

"What do you mean?"

"Was she not in danger of falling in love with some one else than the Guide, and might he not wish to take her where he could have her all to himself?"

"I tell you that he loves some one else, Miss Vincent," impatiently said the baron.

"That is but a blind; but I detain you, and see that I must give you proof of what I say."

"First, Lulu was going to ride this afternoon, and I volunteered to accompany her, and saw that she did not like it; but as I wanted the exercise I went, and you know the result."

"Upon returning this evening I picked up these two letters, open upon her table, and my woman's curiosity getting the better of me I read them. Here, read for yourself; it is in Radcliffe's writing."

Baron Saville took the letter handed him and recognized the bold hand of the Trailer, which he had before seen.

Aloud he read as follows:

"THURSDAY.

"LULU:

"I do not understand your letter. You confess that you love me more than all else, and yet ask permission to indulge in a flirtation with another man, at the same time accusing me of doing likewise with H—."

"Now you know this is unjust; but I will not upbraid you, for I love you too dearly."

"I will see you to-night under the tree on the river, at nine o'clock."

"Yours ever, RADCLIFFE."

Baron Saville turned deadly pale; but by no other sign showed emotion, while his voice was even pleasant as he said:

"The second letter now, if you please, Miss Vincent."

Without a word Ida placed it in his hands, and again he read aloud:

"TUESDAY.

"LULU:

"I have to leave before you are up, to go on a scout; but meet me on the river bluff at sunset this evening—I will be there, and all shall be explained."

"Yours, RADCLIFFE."

"Well Baron Saville?"

"Well, Miss Vincent?"

"Have you nothing to say about these letters?"

"Yes; their contents are damaging to both parties."

"So I think; but what is to be done?"

"Go in search of Lulu, and rescue her from her present peril."

"But suppose she is with the scout?"

"Then she can remain with him, and I will have the satisfaction of knowing that she desires to do so; good-night, Miss Vincent."

Ten minutes after Baron Saville rode off on the trail of the red-skin kidnappers, and by his side was Burt Graham, and behind them came three score troopers.

When the moon arose, the baron, without difficulty, found the trail of the Indians, and at a swift trot the squadron moved on in pursuit.

"Do you know I think this a wild-goose chase, baron?" said Captain Graham, after awhile.

"Why so, sir?"

"Well, to be frank with you, I think that Lulu was stolen by some one who wished her out of harm's way."

Baron Saville was surprised; was he to hear more bad news regarding the young girl he loved?

But he said, quietly:

"What possible harm could befall her in the fort?"

"The worst of misfortunes—she could fall in love; and fearing such would be the result, the one most interested in her took this means of preventing it."

"And that one is—"

"Radcliffe, the Guide."

"Have you reason for what you say, captain?"

"Yes; there have been signs of Indians about here for a day or two, and although the Trailer has been around he never reported it, and I saw him, this very morning, after he left the fort, in conversation with a mounted Indian. He seemed annoyed at my discovering him, and said the Indian brought him news from the mountains."

"I hope all will come out right, Captain Graham," said the baron; but in his heart he felt a wavering doubt of Death-Trailer. After the letters he had seen and all he had heard, added to the capture of Lulu, it was no wonder.

An hour before day the party went into camp, for the trail was lost; but with the first glimmer of light the baron was at work, and the trail again taken up.

But only for a short while did they follow it, when it diverged into twenty different tracks, which plainly showed that the fugitives had separated.

Here all were in a quandary. They were now in the mountains, and the country was rugged and wild.

"Captain Graham, we will encamp here, and I will alone strike these different trails, unless you would like to accompany me."

"No; I will remain with the troopers. If you find anything of importance, baron, return, and we will go with you."

"Thank you, captain; I hope to be successful," and Baron Saville rode off alone upon a trail leading directly toward a mountain-peak, and showing the tracks of three horses.

CHAPTER XVII.

BAD BLOOD.

It was late in the afternoon when the baron returned to camp, and Burt Graham plainly

saw that he had made some important discovery.

"Captain Graham, I have met with some success. I followed the tracks of three unshod Mustangs for several miles, and then the trail was crossed by another, of three horses, one unshod and the other two shod; the horses wearing shoes were the animals ridden by Lulu and the Guide."

"I expected as much; you will find I was right, baron," said Burt Graham, but his face plainly indicated that he was both surprised and displeased at what he heard.

"Now we will follow up the trail, captain, and see to what it will lead us."

"Certainly. Bugler, blow 'boots and saddles.'"

A few minutes more and the troopers were again on the march, and soon reached the spot where the trails crossed.

All pronounced the two shod tracks to be made by the horses of Lulu and the Guide, and the soldiers gave a suppressed cheer at the thought that Death-Trailer was also in search of Lulu.

"If any man will find the sweet young lady, it will be that same Trailer," said the sergeant of Graham's company, for neither himself nor comrades suspected Death-Trailer of treachery.

But the baron now took a different view of the case; he now felt certain that it was as Ida Vincent had said: the scout had laid a plan to get Lulu away from the fort, and he was now with her, exulting over the success of his plot.

Rapidly along the trail the party rode, until, as it began to grow very fresh, showing that those pursued could not be far in advance, a halt was called and the baron again went on alone, followed after a few minutes by the troopers.

Swiftly, yet cautiously, the baron pursued the trail, until glancing up, at a slight noise, he beheld, not ten rods from him, the form of Death-Trailer, standing by a tree, and calmly leaning on his rifle.

"Hullo, baron, what trail do you follow so earnestly?" cried out the Guide-Scout, in cheery tones.

The blood left the dark face of Henrique Saville, and he answered hotly, while he dismounted and walked toward Death-Trailer:

"I follow your trail, fellow."

"Baron Saville, I do not understand you," said the scout, quietly.

"Then I will make it plain. If I was told to strike the trail of a rascal, I would take yours."

The hand of Death-Trailer dropped quickly on the butt of his revolver; but he said, calmly:

"Are you mad, sir? and of what do you accuse me?"

"No, sir, I am perfectly sane, and I accuse you of having stolen from the fort Lulu Lawton."

"Baron Saville, you lie!" came through the shut teeth of the scout.

Instantly the baron's revolver was in his hand, and the two men stood eying each other in silence.

At length the scout spoke:

"Baron Saville, you know me and I know you, and each of us must die if one or the other raises a weapon; hence, facing you as I do, and looking death squarely in the face, I ask you what your strange words mean?"

"I mean that you are a villain, sir."

"If you do not retract those words, I will kill you, so help me God!" sternly cried Death-Trailer, and his revolver was half raised, as his eye fell upon the forms of Captain Graham and his sergeant, standing only a few paces distant.

The baron saw them, too, and lowering his revolver, he said, quickly:

"Another time, sir; now we will drop this matter."

Death-Trailer bowed, and turning to Captain Graham saluted him, while he said, quietly:

"I find that we are upon the same trail, captain. It is too dark now to follow it further, so we will camp until morning."

"That is my intention, sir; have you made any discoveries?" haughtily replied the officer.

"Only that the Indians divided their forces, and that only one seems to have Lulu in charge. His course leads toward the Cheyenne village of Red Willow, in the mountains."

The captain made no reply, and the scout continued:

"As I see the baron still on the trail, I will follow him. If I make any new discoveries, I will return."

Again mounting his horse, Death-Trailer rode off in the gathering darkness, taking the direction the baron had gone.

An hour after, Captain Graham and his troopers were startled by several shots fired in rapid succession.

Instantly they were on the alert, for the firing was not more than a mile away, and the captain ordered out several old soldiers to reconnoiter.

But in a short while they returned, saying that in the darkness they could discover nothing.

Through the whole of that night Captain Burt Graham seemed very uneasy; sleep would not come to him, and he was constantly muttering,

but whether praying or cursing, it was hard to tell.

With the first streak of gray in the east, he had his troop in motion, and soon came upon an object that caused an immediate halt, for it was the dead steed of Baron Saville, stripped of both saddle and bridle.

The horse had a bullet-wound through his head, and near him were the tracks of another steed—recognized at once by all as made by the hoofs of the animal ridden by Death-Trailer.

But, where was the baron? Where was the scout? Who had been killed, and who had fired those pistol-shots the night before?

These questions the troopers asked among themselves, and came to the conclusion that the baron and Death-Trailer had met in deadly combat.

The cause of the quarrel only Captain Graham knew; but many had heard, as they rode up the evening before, the threat of the scout: "If you do not retract those words I will kill you, so help me God!"

The trail of the scout led from the dead horse to a deep mountain stream not far away, and then continued down the bank.

"Yes, he has ridden here and thrown the body in; now I will press on and arrest the scout. He is my game now, and his doom is sealed," and Captain Graham gave the order to follow on the trail of the Death-Trailer.

CHAPTER XVIII.

DEATH-TRAILER'S WARNING.

WITH a zeal he had not before shown in the pursuit of the kidnappers of Lulu, Burt Graham now pressed on after the Trailer.

The trail was well marked, and though it diverged here and there, as though Death-Trailer was examining other tracks, it led mainly in one direction.

Toward noon the troopers halted for rest and food, and the horses had hardly been picketed out before the rapid clatter of hoofs was heard, and the next instant Death-Trailer appeared in view, riding like the wind.

As he caught sight of the troopers he headed directly for them, calling out in his clear, ringing tones:

"Captain Graham, be ready—Red Willow and a large number of braves are following me."

A momentary excitement followed these words; but Captain Graham's reply came stern and sneering:

"And you run here for aid, do you? Seize that man and bind him!"

Both the scout and the soldiers seemed surprised at the order, and the latter hesitated, while the former cried:

"What means this outrage, Captain Graham?"

"It means that you are a prisoner, sir. Seize him, men, and shoot him down if he resists."

The soldiers sprung forward, compelled to obey their commander; but the scout drew a revolver, and his voice rung with threatening emphasis as he shouted:

"Back! all of you! Order or no order, the man that advances upon me I will kill."

"Seize him, I say!" yelled Captain Graham, at the same time taking good care to protect himself from the scout's deadly aim, by keeping at a safe distance.

Again the men moved forward, and again Death-Trailer shouted:

"Hold! Captain Graham, if you have cause of quarrel with me settle it when this trouble is over, for the red-skins will soon be upon you. Then prefer your charges against me and I will submit; but now, I will not yield to be massacred while bound hand and foot."

The men hesitated; but wild with fury, Burt Graham again repeated his order:

"Seize and bind that man!"

Several soldiers started forward, and once more the scout cried:

"I warn you off, men."

But unheeding now, as they saw that their captain was purple with anger, the men sprung forward.

Once, twice, thrice, the scout's revolver rung out, and as many soldiers fell in their tracks, and the rest fell back.

Seizing this opportunity the scout wheeled and dashed away.

"Mount and after him!" yelled Captain Graham.

But his words were drowned by wild yells, and from a dense thicket charged a large number of mounted Indians, in all their hideous war-paint, and howling like demons.

With all speed the now thoroughly frightened captain formed his men to resist the onset of the red-skins, and at once a fierce fight began.

Though taken by surprise, in spite of the scout's warning, the troopers fought well, and obeyed every order of their really brave captain, for whatever his other faults, Burt Graham was no coward.

But more Indians came pressing on, and the troopers began to give ground, and many believed that the end had come for them.

But in the rear of the red-skins was heard the rattling of rifles—it might be one man firing a repeater, and it might be a dozen.

But it seemed to demoralize the red-skins, and when the next instant a horseman, with a revolver in each hand, dashed upon their rear, they broke in disorder, and pressed hard by the encouraged soldiers, turned and fled from the field.

Thus was the battle won by the soldiers, but with the loss of several good men, and a number wounded.

Hardly had the red-skins been put to flight, when the horseman who had turned the tide of battle, dashed into the midst of the camp.

It was Death-Trailer, the scout.

"Now, Captain Graham, I yield myself your prisoner; and if you will take my advice you will retreat at once, for Red Willow may rally his warriors and return to-night and attack you."

Throwing himself from his horse the scout stood with folded arms before Burt Graham, upon whose face came a flush of shame as his lips parted with the order:

"Seize and bind that man."

CHAPTER XIX.

IN DURANCE VILE.

COLONEL HUGH DECATUR sat in his private room alone, the night following the battle of the troopers with the red-skin chief, Red Willow, and his warriors, and his thoughts were not of the pleasantest kind, as he was anxious about the fate of poor Lulu.

Suddenly the challenge of the sentinel startled him, the trampling of feet was heard without, and the next moment Captain Burt Graham entered the room, bespattered, care-worn, and his left arm in a sling.

"Great Heaven! Graham, what has happened?" cried Colonel Decatur, springing to his feet.

"Something very disagreeable, colonel. To begin, we followed the trail of the kidnappers, under the guidance of Baron Saville, who is a thorough prairie-man, and the next day came to where the tracks separated into twenty different trails."

"Sit down, Graham, and keep cool. Here, drink this brandy, for you look as though you needed it, poor boy."

"I do, colonel; thank you."

"Well, we went into camp, until we could reconnoiter, and having struck one trail of two shod horses and one bare-foot, we followed that, the baron leading some distance ahead."

"Suddenly I saw the baron come to a halt, and discovered that he had met a horseman, who, upon riding forward with several men, we discovered to be Death Trailer."

"Splendid fellow! always on the alert."

"Yes, colonel; but to my surprise I found that the baron and Death Trailer were quarreling—"

"Quarreling?"

"Yes, sir, and the baron told me afterward the cause; but as we rode up we heard the scout threaten to take the baron's life; but our presence, which seemed to surprise him, prevented the affair from going further, then."

"Graham, you astonish me. Why, I would not deem it possible that those two men would quarrel with each other."

"Nor would I have thought so, sir, had I not seen and heard what I did."

"And the cause was—"

"I will tell you presently, sir; well, we went into camp for the night, and the baron, saying he would go out and reconnoiter, rode off alone, and ten minutes after the Fort-Scout followed him, and in about an hour after we were all startled by some rapid firing, as though from a revolver."

"I sent out scouts; but in the darkness they could find nothing, and I was compelled to wait until morning, when we came upon the dead horse of Baron Saville, about a mile from our encampment."

"Graham, I fear you have something terrible to tell."

"I have, sir; the horse had a bullet-wound in his head and was stripped of his saddle and bridle, while, near by, were the iron-shod tracks of the Fort-Scout's horse."

"God in Heaven! can they have met and settled their difficulty with pistols?"

"No, sir, I think that the scout came upon the baron and shot him down; but the body we could not find, and he must have taken it, with the saddle and bridle and thrown all into a rapid and deep stream not far from the spot, for the hoof-tracks of the scout's horse led to the very bank."

"I cannot believe this of Radcliffe, Captain Graham."

"Yet, it is certainly true, sir. Determined to solve the mystery, I rode on after the scout, followed his trail, and when encamped at noon he suddenly dashed into camp with the cry that Red Willow and his band were upon us."

"I instantly ordered the arrest of the scout, and he shot down three of my men, sir."

"Killed them! You cannot mean it!"

"Yes, sir, he shot each one through the heart, as cool as you please, and wheeling his horse dashed away."

"This is marvelous indeed. Radcliffe might have cleared up the baron's disappearance; but

this killing of United States soldiers he can't get over. He escaped, then?" said Colonel Decatur, sadly.

"No, sir; as he rode off the Indians charged us from the foot-hills, and we had a hot fight of it, in which I believe the scout joined from a distance, and we gained the day, but with the loss of several men, and many wounded. I got this scratch in the arm, you see, sir."

"I am sorry; but it is another step toward promotion. Were many of the Indians slain?"

"Yes, sir, quite a number. As they were in force, and we had suffered considerably, I thought it best to retreat."

"You did right. I will go to-morrow with half my command and give them a lesson; you captured the scout, you say?"

"Yes, sir; when the fighting was over he rode into camp, doubtless fearing to be alone, and I had him seized, and he is now in the guard-house."

"And the cause of this quarrel between the baron and Radcliffe—you say that Saville told you?"

"Yes, sir; he told me that he had suspected the scout of disliking him on account of his regard for Lulu, and that before he started with us, Miss Vincent called him into the parlor—"

"Yes, I remember she did."

"And showed him two letters that Lulu had left open on the table; also that Lulu had seemed annoyed when she offered to accompany her on her ride, the other evening."

"And what were those letters, Graham?"

"The baron told me that their contents led him to believe that Radcliffe, to get Lulu out of his way, had planned the attack to carry her off; but Miss Vincent, he said, had the letters and you can see their contents yourself, colonel."

"I thank you, Graham. I will mention you favorably in my reports. Now leave me, please."

The young officer left the room, and Colonel Decatur, with clouded brow and beating heart, paced the floor through the long hours of that weary night.

With the first appearance of sunlight he sought Helen's room, and from her father's lips the poor girl heard the fearful charges against the man whom she loved better than all the world besides.

But it did not overcome her with grief, as her father had feared, for, with flashing eyes, she pronounced it false, and said it was a plot against him.

Then the letters were gotten from Ida and read. Yes, they were in the scout's handwriting, and still she doubted.

"Well, Helen, my duty is plain. She scout must be immediately tried by court-martial—"

"And if guilty, father?"

"Will be shot."

"Where is he now?"

"In the guard-house, in irons."

"Oh, God, have mercy upon his soul!" and Helen bowed her head almost in abject despair.

CHAPTER XX.

A FORCED VERDICT.

GLOOM fell upon all in the fort when the charges against Death-Trailer became known, for with one and all he was most popular, and many doubted that he was really guilty of the murder of the baron, whose sad fate was greatly regretted, for he had won regard and respect during his stay at the outpost.

As for poor Dennis he was at first almost inconsolable; but after an interview with the scout and another with Helen, he seemed to take matters quite easily.

Death-Trailer, the most deeply concerned in the matter, was the coolest of all. He spoke little upon the subject, and was content to await his trial.

At length the court-martial was assembled, and Radcliffe, the Guide-Scout, was brought before them, and the charges against him read out.

When the letters were produced the scout showed no surprise, and to the testimony of Captain Graham he merely smiled.

At length all the testimony against him was brought out, and things certainly looked bad for Death-Trailer; but then the tide turned in his favor when a half-dozen soldiers swore to the coming of the scout to their camp to warn them, his words to Captain Graham, and his voluntary return to give himself up, while before firing upon their comrades he had repeatedly warned them off.

This put another phase upon Captain Graham's testimony, for he had said nothing in favor of the prisoner, but everything against him, and there were those present who began to feel that the captain, for some reason, hated Death-Trailer.

When it also became known that he had saved the day for the troops by flanking the Indians and attacking them, it was evident that the punishment would have been light, for his killing the three soldiers, had not the death of the baron at his hands stared the court-martial in the face.

When asked what he had to say for himself,

Death-Trailer arose, and in his calm tones told the whole affair just as it had occurred.

He said he was returning from a scout when he came across the trail of the red-skins who had captured Lulu, and at once followed them until he discovered where they had gone, by following on the track of an unshod mustang and a shod steed, that he recognized as having been made by the animal which he had presented to his ward.

Returning to get aid from the fort, he had come upon the baron, and Death-Trailer told of the conversation between them, and its termination upon the coming of Captain Graham and his troopers.

Then he went on to say:

"When I left camp so shortly after Baron Saville it was with the intention of seeking him and demanding an explanation of his conduct toward me."

"I did meet him and we had some hot words together, until at length, feeling that he wronged me, he held out his hand, and we parted good friends—I to go on, that night, leaving as broad a trail as I could, and he to return to camp and come on with the troopers the next morning. I had not gone far before I heard firing, and I returned; but it was very dark in the timber, and though I must have passed very near the baron's dead horse, as my tracks showed, I did not see him, and finding no clew to the firing, I went on my way to the stream and gave my steed a drink."

"Upon my discovery of the Indians, the following day, I went near enough to recognize that Red Willow was their leader, and was discovered, and I rode back at full speed and dashed into camp as stated."

"After I had surrendered, I learned from the sergeant that the baron was dead and I was supposed to be the murderer."

"As for those two letters, though they are very like my handwriting, I never wrote them; they are forgeries."

"This, gentlemen, is all I have to say in my defense, and I have told you the whole truth."

The words of the scout made a deep impression; but circumstantial evidence was so clear against him that he must suffer punishment, and after an hour's deliberation, the court-martial decided upon the sentence:

"Radcliffe, the scout, was to be shot dead."

When the sentence was passed upon him Death-Trailer did not move a muscle; his fingers didn't even tighten on the back of the chair upon which they rested; he merely bowed, glanced around the court, then upon Captain Graham, and was led back to the guard-house, to leave it only on the day when he would be led forth to meet his death at the hands of a platoon of soldiery.

When Helen Decatur was told the result of the trial, she simply bowed her head and moaned, while she said, slowly:

"They have condemned an innocent man to death, father."

"I almost believe as you do, daughter; but the fiat has gone forth and nothing can save him now."

Helen looked quickly up, her eyes flashed fire, and she was about to reply, when Ida Vincent entered the room.

"Oh, Helen, have you heard the awful news?" she cried, her handkerchief to her eyes, for she did feel deeply. Death-Trailer had been the only man she had ever loved with the intensity of which her nature was capable.

"Yes, I have heard all; but I would rather be Radcliffe the scout, condemned to death for murder, than Burt Graham, captain of cavalry in the United States army."

"Helen, my daughter, how has Captain Graham offended?" said Colonel Decatur, reprovingly.

"He did not tell the truth as it was. For some reason, and I think I know why, he hates Mr. Radcliffe, and his testimony was biased by his hatred; in fact, I believe, as the scout said, there is a plot against him," and Helen left the room, while Ida Vincent turned deathly pale, and when alone hissed forth:

"That fool Graham went too far. He has lost me my prize. Ay, and I went too far, for though the girl was put out of the way the man for whom I plotted lost his life—but—not—by—the—hand—of—Radcliffe; I feel he is innocent."

"Well, if I have lost, I have the satisfaction of knowing that Burt Graham will never win Helen Decatur. Ah, my dear husband, we are both defeated; we have lost the game for which we played, and the stakes were large," and Ida Vincent sought her room in no very amiable mood. Had Captain Graham crossed her path then he would have aroused a very tigress.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE MIDNIGHT EXECUTION.

AFTER Radcliffe, the scout, was condemned he went back to his prison, full of the most painful thoughts; but he was a man of remarkable nerve; his face was inflexible; it gave no one who saw him a clew to his feelings.

The night after his sentence a person was admitted to see him, having shown a pass from the commandant.

The visitor was none other than Dennis, and he said, feelingly, as he grasped the scout's hand:

"I've come, Misther Trailer, to till yer that ef it's in my power I'm goin' to be afther gittin' yer out o' this."

"No, Dennis, I must meet my fate like a man; we have but one time to die."

"Thru for you, Misther Skoot, an' by ther silf same token we 'ave but one time to live—do you mind that, now?"

"An' whilst we're livin' we moight as well kape it up, fur when we're afther bein' dead we're deader than ther divil, Lord save us!"

The scout laughed at the argument of Dennis, but made no reply, and the Irishman continued.

"Now, I'm not belayin' that Masther Hingrue is dead at all. Yer see, I 'ave seen that young gentleman dead so often, an' ivery time comed back to life, that I'm durned ef I'll b'ave he's dead until I bees afther seein' him so with my own eyes, begorra!"

"An', Misther Skoot, ef I thought he was afther bein' dead, then I'd be carryin' out his orders; but I'll wait awhile yit, an' it's meself that has visited some o' ther boys, ther rigler fellers, an' we're goin' to look fur his precious self, an' ef we bees afther findin' him, why thin yerself won't 'ave to be shot fur killin' him."

"No, not if you find him, and I hope you will, for he never died by my hand."

"I b'ave yer, sur; an' now lit me be afther tellin' yer, that ther'll be a young gentlemine in ter see yer, to-night—a young ossifer, all in uniform, an' yer must trate him well, sur."

"Who is it, Dennis?"

"That would be tillin', sur, an' I was jist told to till yez that he was comin'. Now, good-night, sur, an' God bless yer, sur."

Another moment and the scout was again alone with his painful thoughts.

Thus the hours passed until midnight had come and gone, and rising from his seat Death-Trailer was about to throw himself upon his cot-bed to try and sleep when the key turned in the lock, and in the dim light he saw a cloaked form come into his prison-room.

Then the door closed, the slouch hat and cloak were thrown aside, and with a half-cry the scout stretched forth his arms.

"Helen! you here?"

The answer of the maiden was to throw herself upon the broad breast and burst into tears.

After awhile she raised her head and said, softly:

"Yes, I am here to see you, and I came in this disguise—not that I was ashamed of my love for you; but I wished no one to know of my coming, for I am determined that you shall escape."

"No, Helen; it is perhaps best as it is."

"It is not! You shall not die, and no power will save you unless you can escape. Promise me that you will leave here if I can get you free in some way."

"No one else must suffer for my sake, Helen."

"No one else shall. You are innocent; I know that you are, and free, you can perhaps trail this mystery and prove your innocence. Promise me, Radcliffe!"

"I promise, Helen."

"God bless you! In ten days you will be led forth to be shot. Before that time you must escape. Keep up hope, for I will plot day and night to save you. Now I must go. Good-night, Radcliffe."

Thus the two parted, both with hope in their hearts.

But the days wore along and yet the prisoner remained in his lonely prison.

At length the day of his execution rolled round, and the morn broke with a dreary rain dropping mournfully upon the earth.

To keep the sad scene from the eyes of the ladies at the fort, Colonel Decatur had ordered that the execution should take place at midnight, and in the little acre of timber where were buried the dead of the fortress.

Also, he gave orders that none should go to the execution except the officer in charge, the platoon of soldiers, and Dennis and an old trapper who had volunteered to dig the grave and fill it up after the dead scout was placed within it.

All through the day the rain fell, and a gale of wind sprung up at night, and whistled mournfully through the fort; keeping within doors all whom stern duty did not call outside.

And over the place hung a pall of gloom; no joyous laughter came from the officers' quarters, usually so gay; no light burned in the commandant's cabins; the soldiers in their barracks spoke in low voices, while the sentinels on their posts glanced furtively about them, as though expecting to see some grim specters stalking about.

At the appointed hour, half past eleven o'clock, a platoon of soldiers, under command of a lieutenant, marched slowly to the door of the guard-house, where was Dennis and Trapper Dan awaiting them.

Upon the floor of the guard-house was one of those ominous-looking boxes we all know so well—a common pine coffin, stained black.

Upon the lid were a hammer and nails.

"We are ready. Guard, bring forth the prisoner," ordered the officer in charge.

Out into the dim light came Radcliffe, the Fort Guide and scout—pale, yet perfectly unmoved.

As his eyes fell upon the officer and platoon of soldiers, he saluted politely, and, as if by a common thought, the men presented arms.

Then the eye of the doomed man rested upon the coffin for a moment; but no muscle quivered—he possessed iron nerves.

Taking his place in the midst of the soldiers, he said, simply:

"I am ready, Lieutenant Bolton."

"It is a stormy night, Radcliffe, and raining hard. Throw this cloak around you," said the young officer, kindly.

"You forget, lieutenant, that half an hour hence it will not matter whether I am wet or dry! but I thank you for your kindness," said the scout, pleasantly, and his cool courage won the admiration of all.

Then the order was given:

"Forward, march!"

With reversed arms and slow step the platoon moved from the guard-house, past the sentinel at the stockade gate, and out over the prairie toward the clump of timber—the scene of execution.

Into their faces drove the rain, and no word was spoken as they marched along—the lieutenant leading, six soldiers following, then the scout, after him another line of soldiers, and Dennis and Trapper Dan bringing up the rear, carrying between them the coffin.

Into the timber went the grim party, and then came to a halt. While two lanterns were produced, the doomed man took his position, silently, and upon each side of him, a few feet off, was placed a light, that the platoon might see well how to fire.

"Good-by, Radcliffe. From my heart I feel for you, and the lieutenant grasped the scout's hand.

"Farewell, Bolton. Please say that I faced death without fear."

"I will, old fellow, I will. A braver man never met death. Farewell," and the lieutenant turned away to hide his emotion.

One by one the men, taking advantage of the weakness of their officer, stepped up and wrung the scout's hand; after which they stepped back into the line—ten paces distant.

Then followed Trapper Dan, and he said, bluntly:

"Ef them as has done this don't git hell, then may pelts never be prime in market ag'in."

At last Dennis seized the scout's hand and wrung it hard, while he bent toward him, muttering a few low words.

The reply of the scout only Dennis heard, and then came, in calm question:

"Lieutenant Bolton, may I give the word to fire?"

"Yes, Radcliffe, and it will be the greatest favor man ever did me," quickly replied the young and noble-hearted officer.

"Attention, platoon!"

There was no tremor in the tones—the voice was ringing and full of fire.

"Shoulder arms!"

"Ready!"

"Aim!"

"Fire!"

The last order was drowned in the roar of the guns, and without a groan, Death-Trailer, the scout, fell in a heap upon the wet earth, at the foot of the open grave.

Then followed the order of Fred Bolton, in a broken voice:

"Platoon, forward, march!"

As if glad to escape from the dismal spot, the soldiers marched briskly away, leaving Dennis and Trapper Dan to place the body in the coffin and fill up the grave.

An hour and more passed away, and then two men, wet, bedraggled, and with drooping heads, passed into the stockade.

They were Dennis and Trapper Dan; their work was finished.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE OLD TRAPPER'S FALSE SHOT.

In the most picturesque portion of the range of mountains, visible from Fort Helen, was a rude, but comfortable cabin.

It was situated in a kind of nook of the mountain, and was overhung by lofty, tree-clad hills on three sides, the entrance to the little gorge alone allowing of ingress and egress, and the passage-way was so formed by nature that one determined man, well armed, could keep at bay there a hundred.

The gorge within this rocky gateway was several acres in size, and a perfect Eden of beauty, for a limpid stream ran through the center, a cataract tumbled from above into a tiny lake, and the velvet grass around was untrodden, except where a narrow pathway led through it to the entrance to the valley.

Against the hillside was built the cabin—strong, and capable of resisting both attack and the mad storms that in winter time rushed through the mountains.

Early one pleasant morning, several days after the massacre of the train on the lower

plains, a man sat upon a rude chair just outside the cabin door—a man of large frame, slightly bending with age, snow-white hair and beard, both worn long, and a face burned brown and wrinkled, yet full of determination and boldness.

He was dressed in rudely tanned buck-skin leggings and hunting-shirt, wore moccasins, and had a wolf-skin cap, the tail hanging down his back; in fact he was the very picture of an old frontiersman who never cared to leave his mountain retreat to seek society in the settlements.

By his side lay a huge bear, not dead, but asleep—one that he had raised from a cub, and sitting upon their haunches eying him sharply, were two large wolves, also reared from puppyhood by the old hermit trapper, for he was nothing more.

Another pet, a wild-cat metamorphosed into a tame cat, and a beautiful creature, lay curled up within the cabin, which was large, and, in its way, a curiosity-shop.

Beautiful skins of various animals, the wings and feathers of birds, Indian ornaments, and racks of arms of all kinds adorned the walls.

A cot of skins and blankets occupied one corner, and a large fireplace took up nearly one end of the cabin; but upon each side of the chimney were large, rudely constructed boxes, used for keeping provisions.

Over the cabin door outside, and formed in a circle, were nailed a number of, to those who never saw them, strange-looking things: *they were scalps!*

The old trapper had evidently been on the war-path in his day.

In fact, he had in his earlier days been a great Indian hunter; but at last he sickened of his own race, and took up his abode among the wild tribes of the red-men, until at length he came to the mountain to be alone.

Once a year it was his wont to carry his pelts to the nearest settlement, and as soon as he had disposed of them, buy the year's supply of stores, and return to his mountain cabin.

The Indians called him Snow Hair, and feared him greatly; consequently he was seldom molested except by a roving band of Indians, who might cross his path; but the scalps encircling the top of the cabin door proved that the old trapper had not lost his cunning.

If asked about him, the Indians said he was a great medicine-man, whom the Great Spirit wished to have live alone in the mountains, and the pale-faces who knew of him said that he was doubtless some old renegade who feared to live in the settlements on account of the crimes he had committed.

The morning in question, as he sat in front of his cabin, surrounded by his savage pets, he did not look like a bad man, but one whom sorrow, rather than crime, had caused to shun his fellow-men.

"Now look heur, you 'tarnel ole she-wolf! Ef I can't pick this heur bone 'thout yer greedy gaze fixt upon me, I'll go inter ther cabing an' shet the door, durn yer," and the old trapper looked daggers at the wolf that was eying him so closely while he gnawed his bone. "Well, I guesses yer is hungry, seein' as it's gittin' late, an' 'll jist take my rifle an' go down their hill fur a elk; then yer kin all lick yer chops 'thout lookin' at me."

As he spoke the old trapper rose, and entering the cabin, soon returned with a rifle in his hand, and a knife and revolver in his belt.

At his heels, now, were the bear, wild-cat and wolves, eager for a breakfast.

"Go back, durn yer all! One would think I was a Sunday-skule teacher, an' you all was my kids, goin' to Bible lesson. Go back, durn yer all, or yer'll git no breakfast this very day."

Obediently the quartette skulked back, and the trapper went on alone; but he walked at a slow gait. Evidently the years were beginning to tell even on his iron frame.

As he passed through the narrow entrance to the gorge, his eye suddenly caught sight of an object moving in a clump of bushes about a hundred yards away.

"Waal, that is good—a elk, kumin' as I were lookin' fur him, an' feelin' fur my ole bones, has comed close to ther cabing. I am obleeged, Mister Elk."

Quickly the rifle came to the shoulder, the eye ran along the barrel, and the report followed—but a wild scream followed the report.

"Durn my pictur', I'm gittin' bline! I've done kilt a Injun for a elk; I'll go an' see."

But before moving from the spot the old trapper took one precaution; he reloaded his rifle.

Then, at a cautious step he approached the thicket, glanced within, and the rifle fell from his hands.

"Holy Jeehosaphat! it ar'n't a Injun; it are a woman—an' a white woman, too!"

Quickly he knelt beside the prostrate form—a slender, graceful form, and a face wild, haggard, suffering—a face that was yet beautiful—the face of a woman who had passed her thirty years.

A grayish brown dress, torn and bedraggled, covered her form; no covering had she on her head, and her golden-brown hair hung in heavy masses upon her shoulders.

And those tresses of hair were now wet with

blood, for the cruel bullet had cut its way through the shoulder, making an ugly, but not dangerous wound.

"Waal, I declar—it's a woman an' no mistake, but she ain't much hurt, I's glad ter see; but, in 'tarnal thunder, what am I ter do with a woman?"

"I wish 'twas a elk, an' then all would be lovely. I hate weeminsin' my poor darter—but ef I think o' that I'll go mad. I comed heur to keep from thinkin'; it ain't good to think; but I must take her to ther cabing, an' then ther'll be hot rocks to pay with ther b'ar, ther wolves an' ther cat, 'kase she ain't no elk."

The woman was utterly unconscious, and raising her in his strong arms the trapper bore her to his cabin, without doubt to the great surprise and disappointment of his savage quartette of pets, who could see that the trapper's game was not for them to eat—at least with his consent, and they growled and whined their displeasure. They had heard the crack of the rifle, and it had sharpened their appetites.

"Shet up, durn ye, or there'll be a row in this heur cabing, an' some animiles will git hurt! Ye'll git beatin' instead o' eatin'. Can't yer see I'm in trouble, you ugly varmints? I've got a woman heur, an' ef ye mistake her fur a elk an' go smellin' round, I'll have yer tanned skins tacked thar on ther cabing wall afore many days. That's right, b'ar; go out an' behave yerself; an' ye'll go, too, durn yer."

The bear, as if convinced that the outside of the cabin was better than the inside, had walked himself off; but the wolves and cat soon followed, coming out of the door abreast, their tails on the droop, and a howl on their lips, for the old trapper was not far behind.

With tender care and skill, having laid the woman upon his cot, the trapper set to dress the wound; after which, by rubbing her hands and pouring a little liquor from a flask down her throat, he brought her back to consciousness.

The eyes opened—eyes of great beauty, and looked wonderingly around the room.

Then the lips parted with the question:

"Where am I?"

"You is safe, poor lady; safe as a 'coon up a tree."

The eyes closed, and the woman dropped off into a gentle sleep.

CHAPTER XXIII. THE LONE CABIN.

WEEKS passed away and a change had come over the old trapper's life; he was no longer alone, for he had nursed back to life the poor creature whom he had so nearly slain.

She had awakened from slumber refreshed, and with her mind clear, and from her lips the trapper had heard her story of despair and suffering.

Had heard how the train to which she had belonged had been attacked by Indians, led on by white men, and all massacred except herself—she had shrunk into a large hollow tree, by which she was standing when the attack commenced, and when all was over she came forth to find the corpses of those she loved strewn the ground.

She had a daughter, all she had in the world, and feeling that all was over she rushed like a maniac from the spot.

Whither she went she knew not, cared not; but she kept on until she fell from exhaustion and could go no further.

But as soon as she was able she sprung to her feet once more and continued 'on, on, on, and thus without food she had continued her way by day and night, until she saw before her the figure of a man.

Fearing it was an Indian she shrunk into the thicket, and then came the shot, and she knew no more until she awoke and found herself an inmate of the cabin, and a kind-faced old man bending over her.

From his inmost heart the trapper pitied the poor woman, and, drawn toward her as he had not been toward a human being for long years, he told her why he dwelt alone, far from his fellow-men; he told her that, years before, more than a score, he had been a guide at a distant fort, and that he had a lovely wife, whom one day he found had proved false to him.

Stung to madness, he had taken the life of the man who had destroyed his happiness, and one night, with his baby daughter in his arms, had left the fort forever.

Coming further west he had placed his daughter in the care of a good settler and his wife, and again became a hunter; but alas! when his daughter, whom he idolized, grew to womanhood, she too went astray, ruined by a young officer at the fort.

"It war in ther blood ter do wrong, I fear, an' mayhap she could not help it," the old trapper said; "but I gi'n her up forever, an' I comed heur to ther mountings, an' heur I have lived ever sin'."

"And your wife and daughter, have you never heard of them?" asked the woman.

"No, an' I never want ter. They choosed the'r way, an' I choosed mine. Ef they is happy, I is content. This are my home, an' heur I'll die one day, an' these heur critters will git hungry an' chaw me up, an' leave my bones for

Gabriel to put together ag'in at the day o' judgement," sadly said the trapper.

"No, if you will let me I will stay here with you. I have no friends, no one to love me, no one to love, and I would like to stay here with you; you are getting old, and I will care for you; I can shoot a rifle and pistol well; you can show me where the game is, and we'll be quite happy, and you will be my father."

"Yes, I'll be yer grandfather, 'kase I is nigh on ter seventy-five now. I got so durned ole, I quit courtin' several years back; but you won't like it heur, granddaughter?"

"Yes, I will! Just try me. The bear, wolves and cat have made friends with me now, and you have plenty of nice buck-skin out of which I can make myself clothing, and I will dress like an Indian, and work my clothes with beads, and—"

"I'll be boun' yer'd want ter have yer clothes fringed ef thar was no one but ther b'ar to look at yer! It's ther way o' weemin; but, what are I ter call yer?"

"Call me Nellie."

"It are a pretty name. I call that thar she-wolf Peggy, arter my mother, an' thet durned he-wolf I call Capt'in, arter the young officer who ruined my darter, an' many a kick I gi'n that thar he-wolf on account o' his name."

"And the bear, what do you call him?" asked Nellie, as if anxious to draw the old man's thoughts from the past.

"I call him Injun, an' he's as sly as a Injun, too."

"And the wild-cat?"

"I call him Ole Woman, 'kase he reminds me o' an ole hen; but he ain't ther kind o' cat tho', 'kase he's a tom-cat; yet I calls him Ole Woman all the same."

"Have you any other pets?"

"No, 'cept my rifle an' knife; but I did hav' a young deer, an' he comed prancin' up ther gorge one day an' them four animiles pretended to mistook him for a stranger, an' they jist bounced him, and he were a chawed up deer in no time."

"But I gi'n all four o' them blue blazes fur it, an' ther 'tarnal critters didn't look me in ther face fur a week arter it—they was so 'shamed o' thersef."

Thus was it that Nellie became an occupant of the mountain cabin, and it was not long before she was a sure shot with rifle and pistol, and learned the mountains and prairies well.

One day the old trapper started upon his trip to the settlement, and went, as was his usual custom, to the nearest Indian camp for a horse, and the story he there told of the woman under his care gave the red-skins an idea that she was a spirit from the other world, returned to earth for some purpose of the Great Spirit, and they at once called her the Hermit Huntress.

The old trapper had a reason for this; he was anxious to so awe the red-skins as to insure the perfect safety of his *protege*, and he certainly succeeded.

After several days' absence he returned to his cabin with two horses loaded down with his purchases; but, when Nellie ran out, the pets at her heels, to welcome him, she noticed that he was very pale, and seemed to be suffering.

"What is the matter, father? You are ill!" she cried, in alarm.

"This 'tarnal mustang took a tumble with me, and he's nigh broke every bone in my body; but I made out to git a-straddle o' him ag'in, an' heur I is; but ye'll have to help me down, Nellie, 'kase my bones is rattlin', I tell yer."

With considerable difficulty Nellie got the old trapper to the ground, and then upon his bed, after which she set to work to make him as comfortable as possible.

It was evident that the old man was seriously hurt, and the woman paled at the thought of his dying, and leaving her alone in that desolate spot.

When the trapper sunk into a troubled sleep, Nellie brought the stores into the cabin and turned the mustangs loose, well knowing they would go back to their camp, some score of miles away.

But, as night came on, contrary to Nellie's hopes, the old trapper grew worse, fever set in, delirium followed, and the poor woman had all she could do to keep him on his bed.

To add to the gloom of her situation a fierce storm swept through the mountains, the pines sighed mournfully, the wolves, recognizing that something was wrong, howled dismally, while the dreary patter of the rain sounded like earth falling upon a coffin.

At midnight the old trapper ceased his wild ravings, dropped off again into sleep, and then sunk to rest forevermore; but the winds still sighed in the pines without, and the wailing of the lonely woman was heard within.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A STRANGE REUNION.

WHEN Lulu found that it was impossible for her to break through the Indian line, as Ida Vincent had done, she did not resist; for she knew it would save her from being rudely handled, if she submitted quietly to capture.

At a glance she recognized the Indian who seized her bridle-rein and dashed away with

her; it was Red Willow, the young Cheyenne chief, whom she had seen only a few days before at the fort.

"Why has the friend of the pale-faces done this wrong?" she asked, for she knew the chief spoke good English.

"The Great Spirit sent the pale-face maiden to be the wife of the Red Willow; let her come," said the chief, with dignity.

"Oh, God have mercy! Must such be my fate? No, it cannot be! A just God will not let it be so; but I fear for Henrique—he dashed so recklessly on in pursuit, and there was some hot firing."

"Yet I must submit for the present. Perhaps I can get the Indian off his guard and then escape; I will try it."

Then she said, as if in anger:

"The warriors of the pale-face race do not win their wives by force; they breathe sweet words into their ears."

"Yes, the Red Willow will sing sweet to the Pearl of the fort; he will make her happy."

"Why did he not come to see her at the fort—why did he take her so?"

"The Great Spirit willed it so; the Pearl will be happy—she must go with the Red Willow."

"She will go willingly with the Red Willow if the Great Spirit has willed it so; but the Red Willow must make her a promise, and not speak with a forked tongue."

"The Red Willow does not lie; what would the Pearl have him do?"

"She would have him take her to his tribe, give her a wigwam, and for two moons leave her to herself; if he will do this she will be glad."

"The Red Willow will do as the Pearl wishes; in two moons she will be his wife."

Lulu bowed her head as if in response; but it was to hide her joy at the point she had gained; in two moons she felt assured that Red Willow would be dead and she again safe in the fort.

After riding some distance the Indian warriors, who had remained behind, came up, and had much to say of their carnage in the fight with the Many-rifle, as they called the baron—on account of his repeating rifle.

But, as several of their number remained behind, and those present did not have a scalp to prove their prowess, Lulu felt certain that the baron had come off all right in the contest, and felt assured it would not be long before he was upon her trail, with force sufficient to take her from her horrible captivity.

But the Red Willow pressed on rapidly, until at length he divided his force into a number of different parties, as if the better to elude pursuit.

With Lulu he alone went, and the maiden made up her mind that she would escape if the slightest opportunity offered, and, utterly fearless, she was determined that not even the red-skin's life should stand between her and freedom.

Whether Red Willow distrusted the maiden or not, it is certain that at every halt they made Lulu was securely bound to a tree, and her intentions thereby nipped in the bud.

When at last the two crossed a small stream and struck the foot-hills, they came upon a number of mounted warriors, who seemed to at once recognize the chief.

From the excited conversation that followed, Lulu came to the conclusion that there was trouble brewing for the red-skins, and she was the more convinced of this when an Indian scout dashed up, his mustang hard ridden, and spoke to the chief in a tone that had considerable fear in it, the young girl thought.

A few moments after the Red Willow turned to Lulu, and said, with dignity:

"My young braves tell me that there are buffaloes on the plains, and my people must have food; let the Pearl ride on into the mountains with Ashasha; he is a great brave and will protect her, while the Red Willow goes on the hunt."

Now Lulu was convinced that Red Willow spoke with a forked tongue, or, in other words lied, and felt confident that the troops were in pursuit and her heart gave a great throb of joy, and she said:

"The Pearl will do as the Red Willow says."

Then she turned to look upon her escort, and she was evidently not pleased with that Indian.

Ashasha was a villainous-looking brave, who looked as if he could take a scalp as coolly as a schoolboy would peel an orange; she had seen him before; he was the red-skin who had taken her pistol from her after she had fired it in the face of the warrior who seized her bridle-rein, and the brave she had then slain was the brother of the one who was now to be her guard; but Lulu fortunately did not know the family ties existing between them, or she would have felt less comfortable.

"Come, me ready," said Ashasha, ranging his mustang alongside of Lulu's horse, and at a gallop they went back into the mountain range.

After an hour's rapid ride, they came to a halt, and the great brave, lacking in gallantry, motioned to Lulu to dismount, while he held in his hand his lariat, with which he bound her to a tree.

Then he offered her food—dried buffalo-meat—which she ate, for she was hungry.

After eating sufficient for two ordinary men, Ashasha seated himself upon a log, took out his pipe, and began to smoke.

But had he seen a pair of eyes glaring upon him he would not have so complacently enjoyed his smoke.

Those eyes gazed upon him from a thicket near by, and the owner of those eyes had dashed into shelter, when the Indian and his prisoner approached.

Now as the savage sat in calm silence, a rifle barrel peered from the thicket, a bright eye glanced along it, and then it was lowered, to be again raised.

Then the finger touched the trigger, the bullet sped on its deadly mission, and with a leap into the air, a suppressed war-cry, and a short struggle, Ashasha was a dead red-skin.

At the report of the rifle Lulu also had uttered a slight cry, and when she saw her guard fall dead, she glanced quickly toward the thicket.

The smoke drifted slowly away, and from the foliage stepped a slight form, clad in buck-skin, and with long masses of gold-brown hair hanging down her back.

"Lulu! Lulu! my own child, is it you?"

Such was the cry, in trembling accents, that the maiden heard, and then the form dashed toward her.

"Mother! oh, mother!"

It was all that Lulu could say, for she felt herself drawn close to her mother's heart, and warm kisses upon her lips.

For some moments no word was spoken; then the mother, recovering herself first, quickly severed the bonds that yet held her daughter.

And then, as if realizing that there was danger there, she cried:

"Let us not stop here. Come with me; we will soon be in safety—be where red-skin dare not come."

Quickly Lulu was mounted, and springing upon the Indian's mustang, the Hermit Huntress led the way down the hill-side and turned into a small stream.

Following the water-course for some distance, she turned into another brook, and thus, keeping only in the beds of the rivulets, continued on for some miles until she came to the opening in front of the gorge where was her cabin.

"We must leave no trail. Await my return, Lulu," and in a few moments the mother was back again, bearing in her arms a large roll of buffalo and bear robes.

These she quickly laid down from the edge of the stream to the rocky entrance to the gorge, and led the horses upon them into the valley.

"There, back of the cabin, is a cavern where we can hide them. Now we are safe—now we can tell each other all that has passed since that fearful massacre. Oh, Lulu, I believed you to be dead. I could hardly believe my eyes when I saw you bound to that tree. I was so unnervered I raised my rifle again and again before I could fire at that hated red-skin; but tell me, Lulu, how it is I find you here?"

"I believed you dead, also, mother," said Lulu, and then she made known all the circumstances with which the reader is acquainted, and heard from her mother the story of her sufferings and trials, and how, since the death of the old trapper, whom she had buried in the gorge, she had lived alone in the cabin, with only her savage pets for company.

Lulu glanced at these same pets with a shudder; but they seemed disposed to be friendly, and Captain came up and licked her hand, as though to welcome her, a kindness on his part, seeing that the coming of the maiden had deprived him of a meal of fresh deer's meat.

CHAPTER XXV.

KNIFE TO KNIFE.

WHEN Death-Trailer said that he had joined Baron Saville, after leaving the camp in the timber, he had spoken truly, and it had also been as he said—an understanding between them had resulted in the scout's acquittal of wrong-doing in the mind of the young nobleman.

Where the blame lay he felt assured he could find out upon his return to the fort; but his suspicions of Ida Vincent and Burt Graham he did not make known to the Death-Trailer.

Ever since Dennis had told him what he had heard pass between Ida and the captain, he had suspected them both of wrong-doing; but he could not believe, until he had talked calmly with the scout, that they could originate the plot they had.

With a determination to sift the whole matter upon his return to the fort, the baron parted with Death-Trailer in a most friendly way, and at the Trailer's suggestion started on his return to camp, to bring on Graham and his troopers in the morning.

Hardly had he gone half a mile from where he left the scout when he heard the fall of hoofs, evidently in a gallop.

They seemed to be moving in a direction that

would not pass very near him, and he dismounted from his horse and ran at full speed, so as to head off the rider.

Having gained the proper position he stopped and listened.

But the hoof-strokes were no longer heard; still the baron remained quiet; awaiting to see what would turn up.

And something did turn up, but quite unexpectedly to the baron, in a different direction from that he was expecting, for suddenly, from the very spot where he had left his horse, he heard several shots fired rapidly.

What could it mean? He waited awhile and then cautiously retraced his way and came upon the dead body of his horse without saddle or bridle.

Here was a mystery for him to fathom, and he was standing in deep thought when he again heard the sound of hoofs, and in the same direction as before.

Again he ran toward the sound, and beheld two forms instead of one.

He raised his rifle to fire, and then hesitated; perhaps they were friends; perhaps one might be Lulu; in the darkness he could not tell.

No; he would not fire; he would dog their steps and keep near them, unless they rode fast, then he could follow the trail.

Then on foot went the baron, keeping the two riders in sight as well as he could, and every moment more and more convinced that one was Lulu.

At length the pursued quickened their pace, and the trailer was at fault; it was too dark to follow their trail; but in a short while the day broke and then the baron went swiftly on; the trail before him was of a mustang and iron-shod horse; it was the track they had followed the day before.

Must he turn back and join the troopers or await their coming up?

No, he would go on alone; perhaps he would come upon the scout.

And on he went, until he came to a high ridge; there he beheld several Indians on their ponies, riding hither and thither, and he felt that he must be cautious, so he made a flank movement and gained the wooded hills.

Here he found a position which gave him a view of the surrounding country for miles, and he saw, some distance away, a large body of mounted red-skins; then he beheld them move away in column, back upon the way he had come, until, with wild yells, they broke into a run.

Far in the distance he saw the cause of this headlong charge; a horseman sat upon his steed, quietly observing their movements.

That horseman, even so far off, the baron recognized: it was the Death-Trailer.

For full a minute the scout watched the coming Indians, and then, wheeling his steed, dashed away out of sight, the whole band at his heels.

"He'll lead them upon the troopers and then there will be a lively fight. Now to decide upon my best course—Ha!" and the baron turned suddenly as the neigh of a horse reached his ears.

In the valley below he saw two riders. One was mounted upon a mustang, the other upon a bay thoroughbred.

There was no need for him to look twice: it was Lulu and her Indian guard!

"Fate is kind to me. I will strike their trail, and Lulu shall soon be in my arms. Poor girl, how she must have suffered."

"I am indeed lucky, for the Indian's mustang will mount me."

Looking to his arms, the baron descended the hill and was soon upon the trail, and in rapid pursuit.

But the Indian and his captive rode swiftly along, while the baron was on foot; yet he did not despair and pressed on as fast as he could go, until he suddenly came to a halt.

The cause of this halt was a dead body lying before him a few feet, and directly across the trail he was following.

"What can it mean? This is the body of her Indian guard; I recognize his yellow blanket. Can she have killed him and gotten away?"

"No, this is a rifle-wound. Here is his pipe, and here is a piece of lariat cut to pieces; she was evidently bound to that tree with this—yes, here are the marks of her boot-heels in the ground."

"Can Death-Trailer have made a circuit, and headed them off?"

"No, he could not have seen Lulu from where he was, and this seems to be the only opening through these hills."

"Some one else—perhaps some trapper—has rescued her; or perhaps a Sioux warrior. I will see. If such is the case she has escaped one danger to fall into another."

Quickly the baron went to work inspecting the surroundings, and at last came to the conclusion that whoever had aided Lulu and killed the Indian had retreated by way of the brook, for the tracks of the two horses led to the water and there ended.

His first care was to go down the stream as the most natural course for them to take, as it led to the fort; but he soon came to a place over

which the water tumbled, and he knew that it was impossible even for a mountain goat to go down it.

There were no tracks on the bank leading round it, and he hastily retraced his way.

As he reached the spot from which he had started he suddenly came upon three mounted Indians.

They spied him as quickly as he did them, and the butts of four rifles went simultaneously to as many shoulders, and four reports rang out.

One Indian dropped dead from his saddle, and the baron felt a bullet tear through his left shoulder and another strike him in the leg, while the third leaden missile whizzed close to his ear.

But, though wounded, he was undaunted, and still held the advantage, for his was a repeating rifle.

Quickly rung out another shot, and a second red-skin fell.

But the third was now upon him—a splendid specimen of savage manhood.

It was the Red Willow, and his eyes were ablaze, for he thought he saw in the pale-face before him the slayer of Ashasha and the rescuer of Lulu, his intended bride.

"Will the white man fire?" cried Red Willow, and dropping his knife he raised both hands above his head.

Nine hundred and ninety-nine men out of every thousand would have answered the Indian's question by painful demonstration; but though his finger was upon the trigger, he lowered the muzzle of his rifle.

"What would the Red Willow?" asked the baron, recognizing the chief, whom he had seen at the fort.

"The Red Willow knows why the pale-face is here. He followed the trail of the pale pearl, and has taken her from the red chief."

"Yes, I followed your trail, Red Willow; why did you, whom the pale-faces trusted, take the Pearl?"

"The Great Spirit willed it so; she is to be the wife of the Red Willow. Give her back to the red-man!"

"Red Willow is a fool. If he wants the Pearl he must fight for her; his knife is sharp; let him come on," and the baron threw aside his rifle, drew his knife from its scabbard, and laid down his revolvers.

"The pale-face is a great brave; he could kill the Red Willow with his many rifle; if he kills the Red Willow, he can take back the Pearl to his people; if the Red Willow kills the pale-face brave, the Pearl will go to the red-man's wigwam."

"Come on, Red Willow, and quit your palaver!" cried the baron, impatiently; and then he added to himself:

"These northern tribes are tiresome fellows to get up a fight with; the Comanche and Apache fight at the drop of a hat, and pow-wow afterward. I'll bleed to death before the fight begins."

With a bound he faced the Indian, his knife on guard, and at once a desperate combat began.

The Red Willow had never met his equal before, and was confident of an easy victory; but the first clash of the knives discovered to him that he must be wary.

While surprised at the sudden onset of the baron, he received a terrible gash across the breast, and almost immediately a thrust in the arm followed.

This would never do; he must seize the foe in his powerful arms, and he rushed in upon him, getting another wound as he did so.

But here the Red Willow found he had made another mistake: if he was strong, the pale-face was much stronger, and bent the Indian backward to the ground; then the two rested thus for full a minute, glaring into each other's eyes.

Like a flash, then, the fight was renewed again, and the Red Willow gave the baron a deep wound in the right arm; but it did not check the downward-coming knife, which, with a peculiar *chug*, buried itself deep in the red bosom of the Indian.

The bronze arms then relaxed their grasp, and the Red Willow was dead!

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE BATTLE BY THE WAY.

THOUGH panting with fatigue, and weakened from loss of blood, Baron Saville kept up his nerve, and said, quietly:

"That was a hard fight. I think I'll take the war-bonnet and scalp of the Red Willow for revenge for kidnapping Lulu. Ha! I'll take all the scalps, as it may cause other Indians to lay it upon the Sioux."

Quickly the Red Willow was stripped of his eagle-feathers and scalp-lock, as were the other red-skins, and then the baron set about binding up his wounds as well as he could, for they were serious.

Having stopped the bleeding, he looked about for the Indians' horses, for he knew they were mounted.

They were hitched a short distance off, and to

his delight he saw that, though two were mustangs, the third was a large, fine animal, wearing his own bespangled Mexican saddle and bridle.

"There has been a fight, and this is a trooper's steed; and a fine one; but how comes my saddle and bridle upon him, I wonder?"

"Ah, I have it; the red-skin that captured this horse, and whoever it was that shot my steed and got his trappings, had to yield them up to the chief. Thank Heaven I am so well provided again."

"But I am getting very weak. I must see if I cannot overtake Lulu and the one who is with her."

Throwing the trappings of the mustangs into the swift stream, the baron turned the two animals loose, and then, mounting the trooper's horse, rode into the water and turned in the opposite direction from what he had taken before.

Watching the bed of the brook carefully at every point where another stream flowed into it, he detected tracks not yet wholly obliterated by the force of the current, and soon came to the spot where the Hermit Huntress and Lulu had turned out to go to the entrance of the gorge.

Now, had it not been for one thing, the baron would have continued on up the stream *ad infinitum*, looking in vain for the tracks leaving it; but his eyes fell upon a long row of buffalo-ropes and bear-skins leading up to the rocky face of the cliff.

Of course he saw at a glance what they had been put there for, yet could not understand why they had been left there, unless those who put them down had not had time to take them up.

This was his surmise; but it was incorrect, for both the Hermit Huntress and Lulu, in their joy at being reunited, had forgotten them.

Following the line of robes, the baron soon came to the narrow opening in the face of the hill, and rode boldly into it, and his eyes fell upon the cabin and two forms in front of it.

A loud cry of joy greeted him, for at that distance Lulu recognized him and came running to greet him, followed by the Hermit Huntress.

But the strength of the brave man was gone; he had kept up while his life depended upon it; but now gave way, tottered and fell.

"Oh God! he is dying," cried Lulu.

"No, no, I am only wounded and very faint. I have lost a great deal of blood, Lulu; but don't mind me—take those robes away; they led me here, but they may lead others."

Away darted the Hermit Huntress to obey his bidding, and upon her return, found that the baron had reached the cabin, with Lulu's assistance, and was reclining upon a buffalo-robe upon the floor, while the four savage pets were examining him uneasily from outside the door. They seemed to be thinking that this healthy-looking stranger would make large inroads into the cabin larder.

In a few words Lulu presented her mother to the baron and told him how their meeting had come about, and all that had happened, while Nellie, or, as I should now call her, Mrs. Lawton, dressed his wounds with skillful hands, extracting, with little difficulty, the bullet imbedded in the shoulder, and which, fortunately, had broken no bones.

Though the quartette of pets at first looked upon the baron with suspicion, they soon began to glance kindly at him, and after awhile patronized him with their friendship.

But had they foreseen that his coming there was to break up forever their happy household, and make them shift for themselves in the mountains, they doubtless would have pounced upon him then and there.

Fortunately, however, they did not know that it was planned that the baron and the two ladies were to take their departure from the cabin as soon as he felt able to stand the fatigues of the trip back to the fort, where had transpired so much since his leaving it.

"And what will we do with Injun, and all of them?" asked Lulu, and the bear gave her a growl of approval as his name was mentioned.

"They will have to return to their native wilds, and it will not be long before they are as savage as those of their kind that have never been civilized," laughed the baron.

Thus was it arranged, and one pleasant morning the cabin was closed, the horses were saddled, and the three human beings bade farewell to the four brutes, and wended their way slowly out of the gorge.

The savage pets seemed to feel that something was wrong, for they roamed about nervously, and when they could no longer see their human friends, both Peggy and Captain set up a doleful howl that echoed and re-echoed through the mountains.

A perfect frontiersman, the baron led the way, and after a long ride came to the last foot-hills between them and the fort; before them lay the boundless plains.

In a clump of timber they halted for the night, but hardly had they dismounted and unsaddled their horses, when the baron's quick eye

caught sight of a dozen horsemen coming rapidly upon their trail.

"We are pursued, and will have to fight it out. No, you and your mother, Lulu, mount the two horses and leave me the mustang—you can easily distance them on those animals and gain the fort—it lies due north-east—yonder."

"And you, Henrique?" asked Lulu.

"I will keep the mustang, hold the red-skins at bay as long as I can, and then follow you."

"You will do nothing of the kind, sir; neither my mother nor myself will leave you," said Lulu, quickly.

"Certainly not; we will remain and fight it out together," pluckily replied Mrs. Lawton.

"Well, we doubtless can keep them back, and yet elude them—you each have a rifle and are fair shots, and my weapon is a repeater."

"Here is a ravine in which we can hide the horses, and the Indians can approach us from no direction without coming under our fire."

"Now get supper, and I will watch those fellows," said the baron.

The Indians had, in the mean time, come quite near the motte, and evidently suspected that it concealed an enemy, for they halted, and were carrying on an excited conversation.

There were fifteen of them in all, and were a war-party on a scout.

While they were reconnoitering, Lulu and her mother got supper, and still watching their foes the three fugitives ate a hearty meal.

"Now we will pack up, ready for a sudden start, if we have to," and the horses were soon in readiness.

But, just then the Indians started in a headlong rush for the timber. They had at length determined what course to pursue.

"Down quick, and be ready! Lulu, you and your mother fire at those in advance; your mother take those on the left, you those on the right; I will single those out in the rear; but, do not fire until I tell you," said the baron, calmly.

With perfect coolness they took their places, and swiftly the red-skins came on—nearer and nearer until they were within easy range.

"Now!"

At the word three rifles flashed and two Indians and a mustang went down.

But, rapidly rattled the repeating rifle; one, two, three, four times, and always with effect upon red-skin or mustang, and not knowing how many shots were to come, the Indians fired a volley, wheeled quickly about, and rode back to shelter, leaving one-fourth of their number on the field, and several mustangs.

In the excitement of firing upon the approaching red-skins, the baron did not hear a faint cry; but, as he turned to congratulate his companions upon their success, he beheld Mrs. Lawton lying in Lulu's arms, and the blood oozing from a wound in her breast.

"Oh! Henrique, my mother is wounded," cried poor Lulu.

"My end has come; you and Lulu must go on without me," said Mrs. Lawton, faintly.

"I hope it is not as bad as that," said the baron, but he felt that the woman was dying.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE DEATH-SCENE IN THE MOTTE.

"Do you think the Indians will charge us again, baron?" asked Mrs. Lawton, anxiously.

"Not until night comes on. We have given them a lesson that will make them cautious."

"Then listen to me, for I have something to tell Lulu, and I wish you to hear it; I should have told her long ago."

Seeing that Mrs. Lawton really desired to make a confession of some kind, the baron arranged her in a more comfortable position, and said:

"Shall I tell you frankly about your condition?"

"Yes, by all means."

"Then you cannot live long—"

"How long?"

"An hour perhaps; the hemorrhage is internal, and I cannot check it."

"I knew that I was dying," calmly said Mrs. Lawton.

"Oh, mother, must you leave me, and forever? Oh, Henrique, say that there is hope."

"Would to God I could say so, Lulu."

"Yes, I am dying, and what I have to say I must say quickly. First, let me tell you that Lawton is not my real name—I assumed that name when Lulu was a little infant. My father was a rich man, and I and a brother his only children. Our mother died when we were very young, and losing her influence my brother became very wild—oh, so wild; in fact, he went on from bad to worse, until at last my father received a letter from him written in a distant State.

"That letter told him how in anger he had killed a man, and was then in the penitentiary for life; but not under his own name, but under an assumed one, for when arrested, feeling that he had disgraced his own name, he gave another,

and none would ever know the truth, he wrote.

"It was a cruel blow to both my father and myself, for we dearly loved the erring boy; but my father was proud and extracted a solemn oath from me that I would never again confess that I had a brother."

"Then my father and myself went on a tour to Europe, determining, upon our return, to settle in another State."

"We remained abroad until I was eighteen, and upon the passage home I was swept overboard in a storm, and would have been lost but for the bravery of a young and exceedingly handsome Englishman, who sprung into the sea and rescued me."

"Of course after that we became good friends, and in one year more I was his wife. How I loved him God only knows, and I believe that he loved me as well; but now comes the sad part of my story."

"One night, some six months after our marriage, my husband returned home after a week's absence, unexpectedly, and coming in a side door ascended to a balcony that our bedroom opened upon, and there he saw me and one other person."

"That other person was my brother; he had escaped from prison, and before sailing for South America came to say good-bye to me, and not daring to let my father see him, he wrote me a note saying he would meet me in the garden."

"I met him, and carried him to my own room, and I was in his arms, bidding him farewell, for I felt I should never again see him, when my husband saw me, and not knowing that I had a brother, for my father would not allow me to tell even him, he believed the worst things against me."

"Had he come in then all would have been well; but he left me, and I did not know he had been there until I received a letter from him next day, saying what he had seen and bidding me forever farewell."

"It nearly killed me, Lulu, but a few months after you were born, and I then had something to live."

"Shortly after my father died, and I was left almost penniless, when I believed I was rich; but my father had speculated largely and thus lost his fortune."

"In my distress my mother's brother, a bachelor uncle, and an officer of the army, wrote me he would adopt me if I would take his name—Lawton."

"Of course I accepted his offer, and we moved West, where he was then stationed."

"A year ago I received letters from England, inclosing a photograph that I at once recognized as that of my husband; though it looked younger than when I had first met him."

"The letters were from lawyers in London, and asked if my husband was Paul Radcliffe; and if so was he anything like the photograph? also if I had any knowledge of his early life please to communicate with them, as it was important."

"Also, they stated they desired to find this Paul Radcliffe, and detectives had traced him as far as the Western frontier and there lost him; but, what is it, Lulu?"

"Go on, mother; I will tell you when you have finished," said the maiden, and she and the baron exchanged a strange look.

Then, with one hand clasped by Lulu, and the other pressed hard upon the wound in her breast, Mrs. Lawton continued, speaking with evident effort and not without great suffering:

"Having often heard my uncle speak of a famous scout named Radcliffe, and describe him as a handsome man, I replied to the lawyers, giving them all the information in my power, and stating that I would myself go to the far border and see if Radcliffe the scout was my husband and the man they sought."

"Alas! you know the rest—the fearful massacre, and how I, believing you dead, Lulu, was willing to die away from all I had once known."

"Mother, the scout who saved me from the ruffians who carried me from the wagon-train; the scout who adopted me as his ward, was Paul Radcliffe, my father."

"Oh, God! I thank Thee! At last, at last! Now I can die content, for he will know that I am not the guilty thing he thought me. Oh, that he had not so effectually hidden himself from me, then I could have found him and all would have been well. Now it is too late—no, not too late, for he will not curse me, as doubtless he has done; no, no, no, he will remember me in kindness, in love."

The hot tears rolled from the eyes of the dying woman, and just as the sun touched the mountain-top she said, faintly:

"Kiss me, Lulu."

"Now kiss me again, Lulu—for your father—bury me here, Henrique, and tell Paul where I lie—he will come to my grave—I know he will, and from the spirit-land I will see him here and be happy. See, the sun has gone down in rosy light—my soul must not linger now."

She turned her eyes toward the golden sunset clouds and they gently closed in the sleep of death.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE WILD RACE.

FOR some time the slender form of Lulu drooped in poignant sorrow over the dead body of her poor mother, while the darkness gathered around her, and cast the prairie in gloom.

"Lulu!"

"Well, Henrique?"

"I will not bury your mother here."

"She asked it."

"True; but I will tie the body securely to the mustang, and we will retreat from here."

"Oh, that seems horrible, Henrique."

"Yes, Lulu; but yonder red devils would drag her from her grave; they respect not a dead pale-face, Lulu."

"You are right, Henrique; it is kind of you to think of it; do as you please."

The body was tenderly raised and laid across the back of the mustang—the same that the warrior Ashasha had once backed.

Having made it fast, in spite of the restless snorting of the mustang, the baron placed Lulu in her saddle, and mounting his own horse rode slowly from the *motte* toward the prairie.

As they left the timber the trampling of hoofs was heard, and the baron said, quickly:

"The red-skins are charging the *motte* again; now for a race for life. Come, Lulu."

With a cry to their horses they bounded away, the death-laden mustang running easily along by the side of the baron's steed.

"Hal! they have discovered that we have eluded them! Hear their wild cries! Yes, and that yell tells that they have discovered us; but, have no fear, Lulu, for our horses run well, and a stern chase is always a long one."

"But see how rapidly they come on," said Lulu, faintly.

"And see how rapidly we fly away," responded the baron, hopefully.

And swiftly over the prairie skurried pursued and pursuers; but, at length, it was evident that the red-skins slowly gained; the dead weight upon the mustang retarded his speed.

Had the horses ridden by the baron and Lulu not been held back by the mustang, they could easily have distanced the Indians.

Nearer and nearer they came, and the baron began to fear that he would have to propose to Lulu to desert the mustang to save themselves, yet he shrunk from doing so, and still held on.

No, he would make another effort.

"Here, Lulu, you hold the end of this lariat and ride straight on. I will drop back and give those fellows a check."

"But they will fire upon you," cried the maiden, anxiously.

"Yes, but my rifle is of much longer range. Now push on with full speed, and I will overtake you."

Handing the lariat, that led the mustang, to Lulu, who kept on at the same speed, the baron slackened up, and presently came to a halt.

Springing to the ground he threw his rifle across his saddle, and rapidly the magnificent weapon sent forth its leaden hail, and with deadly effect.

Yell after yell came from the savages, and a volley was fired in return; but the bullets were spent ere they reached the spot where the baron stood.

Finding that the Indians had suffered sufficiently to bring them to a halt, the baron again sprung into his saddle and dashed on after Lulu; but, once again the red-skins pressed on in pursuit, and several times had the brave man to repeat his lesson of prudence before the Indians gave up the chase, and shortly after rode back the way they had come.

At length the lights of the fort came in sight, and in an hour more the three horses passed into the stockade, the mustang still bearing his dead rider lashed securely to his back.

At sight of the baron and Lulu one wild shout of joy went up from the soldiers, and then a silence like death fell upon all; they remembered the midnight execution of the Death-Trailer—shot for taking the life of the very man who now appeared before them.

CHAPTER XXIX.

A BITTER BLOW.

THE sudden change from a shout of joy to silence was felt by both the baron and Lulu; but they attributed it to the dead form across the back of the mustang.

As Lulu touched the ground the first one to greet her was Dennis, and, after giving her hand a squeeze that made her wince, he sprung toward the baron.

"Oh, Masther Hinrique, will did I know that yer wasn't did; but, it's all ther same now, as yer cannot fitch the poor gentilemin back as was shot fur killin' ye; but, wilcome back, sur, fur it's mesilf is as happy as a nagur with ther toothache."

The baron would have asked Dennis what he meant by saying some one had been shot for killing him; but they were at the cabin door, and that instant Lulu found herself in Helen's arms, to be then warmly embraced by Ida Vincent, who also greeted the nobleman most kindly.

Then Colonel Decatur and Captain Graham entered and again were warm welcomes extend-

ed; but upon the faces of two present rested mock smiles.

"And, only think, we all believed you forever lost, Lulu, for Captain Graham returned after a fruitless search for you, and then I went into the heart of the Indian country, and was compelled to give you up; and you, baron, would to God you had come back sooner, for there has been a sad, sad blunder," and Colonel Decatur turned to the nobleman.

"I regret exceedingly if my absence has caused any mishap. To what do you refer, colonel?"

"It will be a bitter blow to you, and to Lulu, as it has been to me, and to all of us; but the court-martial was determined upon his death, and no power could save him."

Instantly there was silence among all, and again Baron Saville asked:

"To what do you refer, colonel?"

"To the execution of Radcliffe, the scout."

A wild shriek rung through that room—wrung from the heart of poor Lulu, and like an enraged tigress she turned upon Colonel Decatur:

"Who did you say had been executed, sir?"

"The scout, Radcliffe."

"And for what crime?"

"The supposed murder of Baron Saville."

"And this was done by court-martial?"

"Yes."

"May God's curses rest upon them! May they never close their eyes without seeing the man they murdered before them, and may they go to the grave in gloom and disgrace."

The wild words of the young girl went home; Burt Graham felt them, and so did Ida Vincent; also, there were two other officers of the court-martial present, a moment before with smiles upon their faces; now they had ceased to smile.

Without waiting for reply, Lulu continued:

"Colonel Decatur, those epauletted murderers have taken the life of my own father."

"Your father! poor child, what can she mean?"

"I mean what I say—Paul Radcliffe, the Fort Guide and Scout, was my father; I found it out this very night; nay, more, I also found my mother. She was not lost to me as I supposed; she escaped that terrible massacre; but a few hours ago she died in my arms, shot down by the rifle of a red-skin."

"Oh, there have been strange things happening these past few weeks; but the strangest of all, the vilest crime that ever was committed was the murder of my poor, brave father."

"Oh, God! Colonel Decatur, could you not have saved him?"

"I did all in my power, my poor child; but the decree had gone forth. Take her, Helen, and strive to calm her, poor child, for it is indeed a bitter blow."

Helen, as white as a sheet, yet perfectly calm, stepped forward, and putting her arms around the stricken girl, drew her from the room.

Then, Baron Saville, in a few words, told all that had happened—how Red Willow had kidnapped Lulu, and how her mother, the Hermit Huntress, had rescued her.

Then he told of the trapper's hut in the mountains, the old man's death, the savage pets, and how Mrs. Radcliffe came to be the inmate of that lonely cabin.

Also he told of his own adventure, touching lightly upon his own acts, but yet making known his striking the right trail at last, finding the body of Ashasha and his desperate knife encounter with Red Willow, and by accident finding the hut in the gorge.

"Would to Heaven we had come sooner; but I was rather severely wounded, and knowing the dangers of a trip back to the fort, I felt that I should be fully able to cope with all that happened, and for that reason wished to wholly regain my strength."

"As it was we escaped by a miracle almost, and poor Mrs. Radcliffe was slain; but I brought her body along, and Dennis has it now in charge. This is a terrible grief to poor Lulu—mother slain before her eyes and father executed for a crime he did not commit. It was one of the vilest blunders a court-martial ever made, and the witnesses basely perjured themselves."

"Baron Saville, I was a witness."

It was Burt Graham that spoke, and his face was deadly pale.

The baron turned very coolly.

"I thought as much, sir, and my presence here is proof positive that you swore falsely."

"What! do I understand this as an insult?" yelled Captain Graham.

"You are very thick-skinned if you don't take it as such," replied the baron.

Captain Graham was about to make some savage rejoinder, but Colonel Decatur stepped forward.

"Gentlemen, this must end here. No doubt, Saville, you feel sore over the affair, as I do, and all of us, and Graham only testified as he believed, so let us drop the matter. You say Dennis has the body of Mrs. Radcliffe in charge?"

"Yes, sir—"

"She shall be brought here, laid out properly, and have honored burial. We will do all we can to soothe the anguish of poor Lulu. Come,

baron, go with me," and Colonel Decatur and the young nobleman left the room, and went to the cabin formerly occupied by the latter.

There they found that Dennis had indeed taken charge of the body; he had laid it out on a table, placed lighted candles at the head and feet, and when he bought the tapers from the sutler, he also purchased a jug of old rye, and it looked very much to the visitors as though the Irishman intended to have a private wake, to which the only one invited was Trapper Dan, who sat in the corner watching his friend's movements with deep interest, if not with pleasure.

"Dennis, Dennis, what are you about?" cried the baron, hastily.

"What am I about, is it? Why, I am afther givin' the poor leddy a dacent sind-off, sur, an'—"

"Silence! Bring the body to the colonel's cabin and leave it in charge of the women. Blow these candles out, and throw that jug out of the window."

Dennis was nonplussed; but he said, after a moment:

"Yis, sur, I'll throw the Jimmy-John out o' ther winder; but I'll be afther first savin' ther contints. Yer see, Masther Hinrique, I am iver so glad yer has come, sur, that mesilf and Dan heur was afther gittin' lively over it."

"Dennis, this is the body of the mother of Miss Lulu, and every respect must be paid it. When I come in to-night, I will tell you all that has happened. You and Dan take a glass or two upon my return, but, mind you, do not get drunk; now do as I tell you."

The Irishman silently obeyed, and in an hour more Mrs. Radcliffe lay in the best parlor of the colonel's cabin, dressed in clothing suitable to her sex, and kindly watched over by several of the officers' wives.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE MEETING AT THE GRAVE.

ON the day following the return of Baron Saville and Lulu, there rested a pall of gloom upon the fort. The soldiers spoke in low tones, the military drills were dispensed with, and the flag hung at half-mast.

Determined that every honor should be shown the mother of Lulu, Colonel Decatur had ordered that the force of the fort should turn out, without arms, and he selected six officers of the highest rank to be pall-bearers.

At the word of command the funeral procession moved from the fort toward the *motte*, where rested those who had died or fallen in battle, on that frontier outpost.

The band moved at the head and played a dirge, and slowly the column filed out of the stockade and wended its way to the grave.

Lulu was on the arm of Colonel Decatur, Helen with the baron, and behind them came Captain Graham and Ida Vincent, both very pale.

Then followed the officers' wives, the servants and rear-guard of cavalry.

Arriving at the cemetery, all saw that the grave was dug by the side of a new-made mound, at the head of which was a white board lettered as follows:

"IN MEMORY OF

RADCLIFFE THE SCOUT.

DIED AUGUST 5TH, 18—,

Aged 38 Years."

As Lulu reached the grave, she cast one long look upon the head-board upon which was the name of her father, and a violent shudder shook her frame.

In deep tones the chaplain of the fort read the impressive service for the dead, and then the grave was filled in, and Mrs. Radcliffe had gone to her lasting resting-place.

As all turned away, Lulu leaning heavily upon the arm of the sympathizing colonel, Captain Graham said to Ida Vincent:

"Remain awhile; I wish to see you."

The woman bowed and dropped out of the line, apparently to read an inscription upon a head-board.

In groups the crowd straggled away, until at last only two remained visible in the graveyard—these two were Ida Vincent and Burt Graham.

"Well, sweet wife, your plot has failed," sneered the man.

"Say rather *our* plot. My plot to carry off the girl was a success."

"Yes, and she is back again, while the scout lies there."

"True, and the girl will soon be out of the way."

"You are determined upon this, then?"

"Yes. I have not yielded up the baron yet."

"Are you aware that he insulted me?"

"Oh, yes; but what are you going to do about it?"

"I would call him out if he was not such a dead shot."

"But as he is a dead shot, and you know it is certain death to meet him, you will have to ambush him, eh?"

"Yes."

"And thereby lose both rank and wealth? No, Burt Graham, if you lay the weight of your

finger upon Baron Saville I will have you hung for—well, you know for what."

The man turned ashy pale, while he hissed forth:

"And you triumph while I fail!"

"No, it will be your own fault if you fail. Why don't you turn robber? You know, since our trouble with the Indians, the renegades are getting very troublesome, and their chief, Ned Doyle, is a clumsy fellow—no dash to him. Why don't you become renegade, get to be chief, and run off with Helen Decatur? I'll give you a little job to do, too."

"A good idea, but one I will hold until the last extremity."

"Better do it now; you know you are just as bad as the worst renegade of the lot."

The man looked the woman sharply in the face for an instant, and then said:

"No; while you are the Baroness Saville, reveling abroad in wealth and title, I have no desire to be a hunted man—an outcast."

"It will come to it yet."

"What?"

"Why, to the baroness and the hunted man. I am determined to succeed, and you will yet be hung."

"You are complimentary."

"Yes, Graham, I know you," laughed the woman.

Captain Graham was silent a moment, and then asked:

"And you are determined to get rid of the girl?"

"Yes, determined."

"How?"

"Through your kindness."

"Indeed! How can I aid you?"

"You go often to Decatur city, I believe?"

"Yes."

"A number of men frequent that place who are suspected of being desperadoes, road-agents, and all that is vile, I believe?"

"Yes."

"You know these men?"

"Yes, by sight."

"Well, read human nature enough to find out which one or two of them will engage in some dirty work—for a golden consideration."

"And then?"

"Get their terms on the life of a man and—a woman."

"Their terms?"

"Yes—how much blood-money they want. How stupid you are."

"And then?"

"Come to me for the money, and I will arrange the plot."

"And what will you do for me?"

"Why, I will get Helen Decatur in your power."

"Agreed. I will go this very day, for I must have no trouble with the baron."

"Not until I am a baroness. Then, you know, if you wish to resent the insult, why, it is not my fault if you make me a widow."

A devilish look came into the woman's face. Bad as he was, Burt Graham was not equal to this beautiful fiend.

Arm in arm the two plotters strolled from the little cemetery, and wended their way back to the fort.

As they disappeared in the distance, a form arose from behind a little thicket, some rods from where the two had stood.

"Bad luck to yez," and Dennis shook his fist at them.

"Here I've been afther catchin' my de'th o' cold on ther damp groun' to hear phat yez had to say, an' yez didn't spake loud enough to skeer a mouse, ther divil take yez!"

"But I'm knowin' yer afther plottin' mischief, 'cause I was hearin' yez talking about insoult, price o' killin' an' et cetera; but I'll sarcumvint yez yit, or my name isn't Dennis Mac-hone."

CHAPTER XXXI.

LADY LULU.

THE day following the funeral of Mrs. Radcliffe a train arrived at the fort, and accompanying it were two gentlemen who desired to see Colonel Decatur on important business.

They were ushered into the room where sat the commandant and Baron Saville, and introduced themselves as Messrs. Leonard King and Roy Martin, London lawyers.

"Be seated, gentlemen, and tell me how I can serve you," said the colonel, politely; "but allow me to introduce Baron Saville."

The two lawyers shook hands with the young noble, and then Mr. King said:

"Colonel Decatur, we have come all the way from England to seek here a person whom we have tracked up to this point."

"To explain, sir, we, as I said, are lawyers, and for years we have been trying to find the heir to a certain title and estates in England."

"This is a strange place to look for an heir to an English title in. Excepting the army, you will find few men of culture out here."

"Yes, colonel, and yet here is Baron Saville, a gentleman who has doubtless come here only for pleasure."

"Yes, the baron has passed several years upon

our frontier, from here to Texas, and a like desire for adventurous pleasure might have brought hither him whom you seek. But can I ask the name of the man you are in search of?"

"Certainly. We traced him across the Atlantic—found that he had married, and then left his wife, and never had been heard of afterward, excepting that he had gone West."

"Then we ascertained that a celebrated guide and scout on the border answered to his description, and bore one of his names; but his frontier name was Death-Trailer."

"Good God!"

Both Colonel Decatur and Baron Saville sprung to their feet.

"Do you mean it, sir—was the man you seek named Death-Trailer?"

"Yes, sir, and also called Radcliffe the scout," said Mr. King, surprised at the manner of Colonel Decatur.

"And Radcliffe the scout was an English noble?"

"We have every reason to believe that he is the one we seek. You know of him, then?"

"I knew of him, gentlemen; but it pains me to the heart to tell you that he is dead."

Both Englishmen were now upon their feet.

"Dead! dead did you say, Colonel Decatur?"

"Yes, he is dead!"

"Alas! Too late! too late!"

"Yes, gentlemen, you are too late. Poor Radcliffe went off on a scout, some time since, and the baron here was with the party, having gone with a squadron to recapture a girl carried off by an Indian chief."

"A mishap befell the baron, and the squadron returning without him, brought back Radcliffe, the scout, as a prisoner."

"It seems the men had overheard a quarrel between the baron and the scout—heard the scout make a threat, and finding shortly afterward the dead steed of Baron Saville, and the tracks of Radcliffe's horse near by, believed that he had shot down my friend here."

"Circumstantial evidence was strongly against him, and he was tried by court-martial, condemned and shot."

The story of the colonel made a deep impression upon the Englishmen. After years of search they had come too late.

Then Colonel Decatur went on to relate to them the romantic history of Death-Trailer, and told them that his daughter was then under his roof.

"Then she is the heiress, for there can be no doubt but that the scout was none other than Paul Radcliffe, who, by the death of his father, some years ago, became Lord Glyndon."

"You see, colonel, the old lord selected a wife for his son—Lady Leonore Dorcas, the daughter of an earl."

"Well, the father and daughter went down to Castle Glyndon to make a visit, and the two parents flattered themselves that all would come well; but the young lady was already in love with some young officer of the guards, told her secret to Paul, and he, like a noble fellow, refused to marry her, and his father, not knowing the reason, for the son would not betray Lady Leonore, drove him from the castle."

"But Lady Leonore, finding the result of the affair to be so disastrous, made a clean breast of it, and Lord Glyndon did all in his power to find his son, but all to no purpose, and on his death-bed, a few years ago, he wrote a letter begging Paul's forgiveness."

"Now, colonel, you have the whole story, excepting that Earl Dorcas was so touched by the grief of his friend at what he had done, that he straightway gave his consent to his daughter to marry the young ensign."

"There is indeed romance in real life beyond all stories of fiction; but I will call Lulu, and let you have a talk with her. She is a beautiful girl, and now that we know the relationship between the two, all see a striking resemblance to her father," and leaving the room, Colonel Decatur shortly after returned with Lulu and Helen.

Then again the sad story was gone over, and Lulu told all she had heard from the lips of her mother, and exhibited a miniature likeness of her father, which her mother had always worn next her heart.

Comparing it with a likeness which he had, Mr. King said, sadly:

"Yes, the scout was none other than Lord Glyndon. We have come, alas, too late to serve him; but you, Lady Lulu, are the heir to a large fortune; but the title and Glyndon Castle will have to go, of course, to your nearest male relative."

"Well, gentlemen, you must not take Lulu from us for some time yet. This country is new to you; remain my guests, and we will do all we can to entertain you," said Colonel Decatur, and the invitation was gladly accepted.

CHAPTER XXXII.

A TERRIBLE RETRIBUTION.

ON the opposite bank of the river from Fort Helen sat two men, concealed in a thicket of dense underbrush.

One look into their faces and it was evident that they were of the ruffian class of border-men.

Their costume, half-frontier, half-civilized, was worn and dirty, their beard and hair unkempt, and their faces not at all prepossessing; they were faces that a child would turn from with dread.

They had come to their position in the thicket at early dawn, and through the whole day had not moved, for one watched while the other slept.

But, as the day drew near its close, they seemed restless, and one of them said hoarsely:

"I kinder hope they won't come, Jack. I don't like this killin' business anyhow, whar it's a petticoat you've got to draw bead on."

"We've got the chink now, Sam, an' it don't do ter crawfish," replied the other.

"I ain't goin' ter, nuther; only I don't like it nohow; but whose ter do the shootin', you or me, Jack?"

"It don't make a durned bit o' difference to me, Sam. I have got the duckits, an' the thing must be did; but is you sartin you has the hosses all fixt?"

"Yas, thar's our hosses jist over the hill yonder, an' every ten miles, fur forty miles, is two more. You bet I wa'n't goin' to be cotched in no scrape; but, yonder comes the gals, as I'm a sinner."

And the speaker pointed to a grove of timber outside of the stockade, in which were visible three female forms, coming down toward the river-bank, where were several rustic seats.

"Waal, what's to be did now? Which is ther gal ter be shootet?" asked Sam.

"Le' me see—she was to wear a blue dress, he tole me; ther one ter be shot was ter be in black, an' t'other one gin'rally drest in white. Now, thar's the one in white; I know that color, prime; but t'other's is so much alike, durned ef I know which is black or blue."

"Couldn't yer guess at it, Jack?"

"Yas; I think ther big one is ther one to be shootet; sartin the woman couldn't be afeerd o' ther leetle one."

The three girls had, in the meantime, seated themselves upon the rustic benches, one a little way apart from the others.

"I've got it, Sam; yonder one by herself is ther game. He said one gal would manage to git t'other one away so thar'd be no danger of t'other two—I'll pick her."

"Guess 'twon't make much difference ef you ar' wrong; they's all gals, an' gals is always gitting somebody into diffikilties; so blaze away, Jack."

"Durned ef I don't. Now be ready fur a hot run to whar our hosses is."

As the villain spoke he raised the rifle and took deliberate aim at the young girl seated alone and dressed in a dark-blue material.

Then came the flash and report, followed by a scream, and the maiden sunk down, dead; the bullet had pierced her heart; it had been a center shot.

Like deers the two ruffians sped away through the thicket, gained their horses, and rode like the wind across the prairie.

The shot was heard by the sentinel at the fort, the puff of smoke floating over the river told from whence it had come, and the alarm was at once given.

Down to the river-bank rushed Baron Saville, Colonel Decatur and Captain Graham in dire alarm, for they had heard the scream.

They came upon a strange sight—Ida Vincent lying dead, and Lulu bending over her, while Helen lay in a swoon upon the green-sward.

In a word Lulu told all: Ida had invited Helen and herself for a walk down to the river, and they were hardly seated before the death-shot came.

"Captain Graham, at once take saddle, sir, and pursue the murderer," cried Colonel Decatur; but the baron had already started, and when Burt Graham and his companion rode out of the stockade he beheld the nobleman on the other shore, spurring rapidly in pursuit of two horsemen far away on the prairie.

Urging on his men Graham followed in pursuit, while a strange gleam was in his eyes, and he muttered:

"What a terrible retribution! killed by the very man her gold had paid to kill her rival! But, curse that baron, he rides like the wind! He must not overtake those fellows, for they might tell an ugly story under the shadow of the gallows. On, men, on! Those devils must not escape," he cried, and drove the spurs deep into the flanks of his steed, while he again muttered:

"If luck holds good that baron's days are numbered."

At length the troopers saw the two fugitives ride into a *motte*, and shortly after reappear, but upon different horses.

"They have relays! This is a planned affair," said Lieutenant Bolton, who was second in command.

"And see that baron! he still gains upon them, in spite of their fresh horses!" cried the sergeant.

And it was true, for, avoiding the timber, the

baron kept to the open prairie, and magnificently mounted—he rode the black stallion that had belonged to Death-Trailer—he gained steadily upon the two men in his front.

Soon after the troopers dashed into the *motte*, there lay the steeds of the fugitives, shot through the head.

Giving their horses a moment's wind, the troopers again started in pursuit; but darkness was creeping over the prairie, and ere long the fugitives, and then the baron, were lost to sight.

Still Captain Graham pressed on. He was anxious about those two men so hardly pursued.

They had a dangerous foe upon their trail—a man who, the captain felt, must in some manner be put out of the way.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

A SUDDEN HALT.

THOUGH the darkness hid them from their pursuers, the two ruffians still kept on at break-neck speed, and at length reached the foothills where was a second relay of horses.

Now they felt themselves safe, and turned to glance back over the prairie, for the moon was now up, and by its light they could see their solitary pursuer, the baron, coming slowly along on their trail.

"Quick, Sam, let's change ther saddles an' bridles an' git out o' this."

"That feller an' in deadly 'arnest, he ar'!"

"He's thet same, Jack; he's thet baron chap we heard on over at 'Catur city; but here's ther horses, lariatied jist whar I leff 'em."

Both men threw themselves to the ground at the same time; but suddenly there arose a tall form before them, each hand extended, and two revolvers presented at their heads.

Both men were terribly frightened; but, ere they could draw a weapon there came in stern tones:

"Stop that now! Hands off those pistols, or you are dead men."

The two men stood like statues; they knew it was death to move; but one of them said, whinily:

"Hold up a leetle, pard; what has you ag'in' us?"

"That you shall soon know. Both of you lie down—flat on your faces; do you hear?"

They did hear and they obeyed, and then their captor stepped forward and quickly removed their belt of weapons, after which he drew from his pocket a raw-hide thong and securely bound their hands behind their backs.

As he finished there came the sound of hoofs and both men looked uneasy; they knew who it was that was coming.

And their captor seemed to know, too, for he said, sternly:

"You men have been in some devilment at the fort. I saw you, with my glass, flying for your lives, and I saw your pursuers—one far in advance of the others."

"These horses I came upon accidentally this afternoon, and concluded to await the arrival of their owners; I am glad that I did."

Soon there came in sight a man on foot, a horse following him.

The man was stooping over and examining the ground carefully as he came along.

"Ho, partner; I have those whom you seek, safe and sound."

The baron instantly stood on his guard, his rifle in hand, and protected by his horse, while he answered:

"Who hails—friend or foe?"

"Friend. I saw your chase after two men and saved you the trouble of catching them; here they are," and the speaker advanced into the moonlight, in full view of the baron, who saw before him a man of large frame, attired in frontier garb, heavy slouch hat and high cavalry boots.

His face was hidden beneath a long blonde beard, and his hair, of like hue, hung far down his back.

In his hands he held a rifle, and in his belt were a brace of revolvers and a long knife.

"I am known as Baron Saville, a guest of Colonel Decatur of Fort Helen; can I ask your name, sir?" said the baron, politely, struck with the appearance of the man.

"Call me hunter, guide, scout, trapper, or anything—I am all of these; but I have here two prisoners for you: can I ask what devilment they have been in?"

"They have committed a diabolical crime. They fired across the river upon some ladies and killed Miss Ida Vincent, an adopted daughter of Colonel Decatur; but I have reason to believe that they shot the wrong one—they intended their bullet for another heart."

The hunter turned toward the men he had captured, and who now felt their hour of death had come.

After gazing intently into their faces for awhile, he turned to the baron, and said:

"Can I see you, sir, apart from these men?"

"Certainly," and the two walked some distance apart, and for a long time were engaged in earnest conversation, the two miscreants shaking in their boots all the time.

"We've done it now, Jack."

"Yas, Sam, the jig's up—we're hung roosters sartin'."

"You bet—our checks is goin' to be called fur suddint now, or I'm a liar."

"I wish we hadn't done it."

"So do I. Couldn't we say as we shot at a duck on ther river?"

"'Twouldn't go down. Oh, Lordy, heur they come."

As the ruffian spoke the baron and the hunter returned, and the latter said:

"Men, I am going to ask you a few questions—and I expect you to tell me the truth."

"If you do, and also obey me in what I tell you, I will spare your lives; if you lie to me, and refuse to obey me, I will myself take you to one of the friendly tribes south of here, and turn you over to them—to burn at the stake."

Both men trembled violently, and blurted out:

"We'll do all yer wishes us to do, sir."

"See that you do. Now, answer me—who did you intend to kill among those three ladies?"

"Don't know her name, sir; she was ter wear a dark dress; but two of 'em comed in dark dresses an' we took chances on hittin' ther right one," answered the man addressed as Sam.

"And who told you to make that shot?"

"The captain at ther fort, sir."

"Captain Burt Graham?"

"Yas, sir."

"He paid you for it?"

"Yas, sir; we got five hundred each, an' was to git half as much more when we reached Frisco, whar it was to be sent by letter."

"Did Captain Graham give you a reason for wanting this girl out of the way?"

"Yas; he said as kow thar was one wanted to splice a feller, an' this gal was in ther way."

"Had you no compunctions about taking life?"

"I pass, pard."

"Had you no thought that you were doing wrong to kill an innocent girl?"

"Waal, I did feel shaky 'bout it; but then, I'd never seen the gal, an' thar was a good deal o' money to be made by the job; but it was a dirty bizziness, an' I guesses we'll see that gal's ghost till we pass in our checks."

"You certainly deserve punishment; but I will keep my word, if you will do as I wish."

"I'll do it, sir."

"Which of you fired the fatal shot?"

"I didn't, sir," spoke up one, quickly; the other was silent, and the hunter resumed, speaking to the murderer:

"You will remain here under the charge of this gentleman, while your partner goes with me."

"Whar, sir?"

"Do you see those lights yonder in that timber?"

"Yas, sir."

"There is where Captain Graham and his troopers are encamped. I wish you to go there."

"Good Lord, pard, they'd chaw me up."

"They will not harm you—they do not know that you are the one they were in pursuit of."

"Ride boldly up, hail the sentinel, and ask to see Captain Graham."

"Then tell him that he must leave camp with you under some pretense; tell him any lie you please; only make him come, and alone."

"If he refuses, tell him that you and your comrade will give yourselves up, and inform on him."

"I'll make him come, sir; I'll tell him my pard an' me wishes ter have a talk with him afore we light out fur Frisco; he'll not want ter talk ter us in camp, you bet."

"Good! Now come with me and do as I say; but no dodging, or, by the God above, I'll track you to the ends of the earth."

"Durned ef I don't b'lieve yer would—you look it; but I'll sarve you right, an' trust yer ter keep yer word."

"I'll keep my word, and you shall both be free within an hour if you do as I tell you; come!"

The hunter gave a low whistle, and a large sorrel mare trotted from the thicket and stood beside him.

"Now mount one of those horses you have lariatied there."

The man obeyed and followed the hunter down the hillside, out upon the prairie.

"Yonder is the cavalry camp; go and do as I wish you to. Make Captain Graham return with you to the spot we just left."

"I'll do it, sir, you bet," and the ruffian rode away in the direction of the timber *motte*, leaving the hunter closely watching his movements.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

A VILLAIN'S DOOM.

FINDING that it was impossible for him to follow the trail at night, even when the moon arose, Captain Graham led his men into a timber *motte* and went into camp.

But he could not rest; he was most uneasy at the thought that Baron Saville might yet overtake the fugitives and draw from them the truth about their crime.

With the money furnished him by Ida Vincent, he had bribed the two ruffians to kill Lulu, and they had made a mistake; they had killed

the very one who had laid the plot to get a rival out of the way.

"It was devilish awkward in them, and bad for Ida; but I am free of her," muttered the captain, and he turned over again upon his blanket, and tried to go to sleep.

"A stranger has come into camp, sir—a queer-looking fellow—says he's a friend of yours, and comes from a train camped in the foot-hills."

"Send him here, orderly. Strange we knew nothing at the fort of the arrival of a train," and Captain Graham arose to his feet.

It was well for him that the faint firelight failed to show the deadly pallor that came over his face as the man came up.

But, without waiting to be greeted, the fellow spoke out.

"How d'ye, capt'in! I'se durned glad ter see yer ag'in. Yer see, I'm guidin' a train inter these parts, an' seein' yer fires I rode over from our camp, an' hearin' as you was in command I made bold to ax to see yer."

The orderly had now gone, and pale with rage and dread Burt Graham said quickly:

"Fool! why did you come here?"

"I comed to see yerself. Me an' my pard wants a talk with yer afore we makes tracks—we's concluded to change our course, an' we can soon settle it up, so jist come along out o' range o' ther camp an' we'll talk it over."

"Where is your comrade?"

"Waitin' for us at ther foot-hills yonder."

"Did you see anything of a single horseman—the one who pursued you?" eagerly asked the officer.

"Guesses I did; he's passed in."

"What! is he dead?" and a joy was in the tone.

"You bet! We go right by whar he's lyin'."

"It will look bad, my leaving camp with you."

"Say you is goin' over ter see friends in ther immigrant camp."

"And in the morning the men will know that there is no emigrant-train near."

"Waal, arter we settle up matters, blaze away with yer shootin'-iron; we'll holler like hounds, an' you kin come inter camp on ther run an' say I led yer inter a trap."

"I don't believe I will go, fellow."

"Then I'll spout."

"What do you mean, sir?"

"We'll g'in ourselves up an' say you paid us ter do it."

"I will go with you; orderly, have my horse saddled; I will ride over to the camp near by to see some friends."

Five minutes more and the two men were riding slowly over the prairie toward the foot-hills.

As they got out of sight-range from the cavalry camp a horseman on the prairie caught sight of them and rode back toward the foot-hills.

Up the hillside the ruffian led the way until they came to the thicket, and here Captain Graham saw a man whom he at once recognized as his other hireling in the attempt to murder Lulu.

"The Cap has come, pard. Git down, capt'in, an' we'll soon fix matters."

Moodily Captain Graham dismounted, and turning found a pistol-muzzle pressing against his temple, while he heard the stern words:

"You are a prisoner, Captain Graham!"

In dismay the officer cried out:

"What means this outrage?"

"It means, Captain Graham, that from these men your villainy is known."

"And who are you, sir?" and the officer looked up into the stern face of the man before him, and which he had never seen before that he remembered.

"I am one, Captain Burt Graham, who knows you as you are—a liar, a gambler, a perjurer and a murderer—one who gained your present rank by the murder of your captain."

"It is a lie!" almost shrieked the wretched man.

"It is the truth. Some days ago I met a man in these hills who attempted to take my life. I was quicker on the draw than he was, and I took his life."

"But he did not die at once; he had time to say how sorry he was for his misdeeds, and told me of yourself—he was once a soldier in your company."

"He told me how you had once befriended him, and though he saw you kill your captain, he kept it a secret, as did also the other witness. This other witness he told me was your wife—whom you had secretly married, believing she was an heiress, and who had married you for a like reason."

"Now you see I know you, my gallant captain—ay, know how you swore away the life of Radcliffe the Scout, for killing a man who now stands by your side."

The officer turned his wild eyes to the right, and there beheld Baron Saville, his arms folded upon his broad breast, his face cold and stern.

"Now, Captain Graham, your career ends within the next ten minutes," continued the hunter.

"In God's name, what mean you?"

"I mean that Baron Saville and myself are

your judge and jury, and we have decided that you must die."

"Die! Great God, I am not fit to die," almost shrieked the wretched man.

"You are not fit to live; your wicked-hearted wife is dead; it is but right that you shall follow her."

"And I must die, you say?" and the hand dropped like lightning on a pistol-butt.

Yet the grasp of iron upon his wrist kept him from drawing the weapon.

"Baron, take these tools, please; they are dangerous playthings for a desperate man," calmly said the hunter.

"Now, Captain Graham, I show you one mercy."

The doomed man glanced up with a look of hope, and the hunter continued:

"You are a soldier—and you have been a gallant one notwithstanding your vile life. In consideration of this, you shall be shot, *not hung*."

The man bowed his head upon his breast, and his whole form quivered with emotion; but, by a mighty effort of self-control, he looked up and said, calmly:

"If I must die, I am ready; who is to be my executioner?"

"These two men—those whom you hired to kill an innocent girl."

The two bordermen started at this; it was a duty they had not expected, and Captain Graham said, quietly:

"It is perhaps best—a just retribution; but tell me—how have I injured *you*?" and he gazed fixedly into the face of the hunter.

"In a moment, captain, I will let you know who I am. Baron, place those two men yonder by the thicket, please. Captain Graham, you take your stand by this tree."

"Now, men, I wish no bungling; your work must be done well—aim at his heart, and fire when I give you the word."

The hunter led the way to the tree, and Captain Graham groaned forth:

"Oh God! to die this way."

"It is best, sir; you have a mother and sister, I have heard, who dearly love you. Were you tried at the fort for your crimes, your name would go down to the grave in disgrace, and those that love you would mourn you not only dead, but dishonored; now it will be thought that you were led into a trap and killed by an enemy, perhaps by Indians. For your mother's and sister's sake, I keep secret your crimes."

"And on the brink of the grave I thank you; now, men, stand ready—my executioners," and a grim smile flitted across the face of the doomed man.

Then he added:

"If I could die in battle, I would be content, but this is horrible; still, I will not shrink from my fate; I am ready, sir."

Struck by the real courage of the man, the hunter said, earnestly:

"Would to God, Captain Graham, you had lived a different life; from my heart I pity you, and that no greater misery may come to you in your dying moments, I withhold from you my name—God have mercy upon you!"

As the hunter spoke he stepped quickly backward several paces, and from his lips came the signal of death.

The doomed man faced his executioners with bold front; the two rifles cracked together, and Burt Graham fell dead, without a groan.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE UNKNOWN PILOT.

FOR some moments after the death of Burt Graham no word was spoken by the four men who had been actors in the retributive tragedy.

The hunter was the first who spoke, and he turned to the two captives.

"Men, you have obeyed me in all that I have ordered; now I will keep my word and let you go; but not one word of this night's work must you ever breathe."

"Go from here as fast as your horses will carry you; get your blood-money in San Francisco, if you wish, but never again appear upon this frontier, if you value your lives."

"You bet we'll dig out o' this, sir. I'd like to be goin' now."

"Go, then, and do not forget that with the morning the troopers will be hot on your trail. There stand your horses; go!"

The two men needed no second bidding, but receiving their arms from the hunter, mounted and dashed away. That spot held a strange dread to them.

"Now, baron, it is best that you make a circuit, and return to camp another way. In the morning you will of course follow on the trail and come upon the dead body of the captain—I will stay near it until daylight, to keep the wolves away, and then go into the mountains, make a circuit, and meet you on the prairie as if by accident, and of course no sign will show that we have met before. When I meet you, I will propose something to the officer in command that I think he will agree to. Now we understand each other?"

"Perfectly."

After some further conversation the two men clasped hands, and mounting his horse, the baron rode away, leaving the hunter standing

by the dead body of the man whom his order had slain.

Making a wide *detour*, the baron rode into camp shortly after midnight, and reported that he had trailed the men to the foot-hills; there he had lost sight of them.

When told by Lieutenant Bolton of the captain's absence, he seemed surprised, and urged that the men should be ready to start at the first peep of day.

Anxious about the safety of Captain Graham, Lieutenant Bolton had the men in the saddle at the first glimmer of light, and the trail was struck and followed, until, just at sunrise, they came upon the dead body of the officer two bullet-wounds in his left side.

The discovery created the greatest excitement, and all felt confident that the man who had entered camp the night before had lured the captain away to his death.

"Graham gambled a great deal, you know, and won large sums of money from men who often threatened his life. Doubtless some of them have slain him," explained Lieutenant Bolton.

"Perhaps; but I would not suggest that idea, on account of his family. Let it be supposed that he was shot by the Indians, or renegades," suggested the baron, quietly.

"You are right, baron; but what is to be done?"

"Return with the body to the fort. We can make nothing of the trails here."

"I will take your advice. Poor Graham!" and the young officer gave orders to strap the body on the back of a horse.

"Here is his horse, sir; he was feeding yonder in the flat," said a trooper, approaching.

"There is some mystery about this, baron. The body is not robbed; he is not scalped, and here is his horse—who can have been the murderer?"

"That is what it will be hard to find out," quietly responded the nobleman, no look on his face showing that he knew the dread secret that the night had concealed.

In a short while the body of the dead officer was strapped to the saddle, and the horses were turned back toward the fort.

After an hour's ride they saw a horseman on the prairie coming toward them. As he drew nearer, at a sweeping gallop, none seemed to know him; who could he be? Such was the question each asked the other, yet none could answer.

With a military salute the horseman drew rein in front of Lieutenant Bolton, and asked politely:

"Do I address the commanding officer of this squadron?"

"You do, sir. By the sad loss of our captain I am in command," and the young officer pointed to the body strapped on the horse, which was led by one of the troopers.

"Ah, he is dead! The work of a renegade or Indian, doubtless?"

"Who did it we do not know; but can I ask your name? You seem a stranger in these parts."

"Yet I know these prairies well. The fact is, sir, I am an independent scout, and having run a trail, I have been on for some time, to cover, I am now looking for just such a command as you have to make a capture that will do the country much service."

"And that is—"

"The band of renegades known as the Prairie Jayhawkers."

"What! you know their retreat?"

"Yes, sir, and I can lead you to it. To-night they hold a council, and all the gang will be there—some thirty in number—and we can surprise them."

"How know you this?" asked the lieutenant, with suspicion.

"From having dogged their steps for some time, and because I have felt that I could destroy them at one blow."

"And your motive?"

"To rid the country of the presence of such a band of desperadoes."

The lieutenant was silent a moment. He longed to be the one who would annihilate the Jayhawker band! but the man before him he distrusted.

Yet what had he to fear with two score troopers at his back?

No; he would trust the man, and if he deceived him, or led him into a trap, he should be the first to suffer.

"What guarantee have I that you will not lead me into a trap?"

"My word only. No, you may bind me, and if I deceive you, why, shoot me down."

"I would trust him, Bolton; he seems honest," said the baron.

"Well, sir, I will trust you! I have with me forty troopers, five will go on to the fort with the captain's body, and the rest will accompany me. Sergeant Wells, you will take four men and proceed to Fort Helen and report to Colonel Decatur the circumstances attending Captain Graham's death, and also that I have gone on a scout after Jayhawkers."

"The two men whom we were sent in pursuit of, you can say, we could not overtake, as they had relays of fresh horses, and they escaped us."

"Yes, sir," and Sergeant Wells departed for the fort, while Lieutenant Bolton, the baron and the troopers followed the strange hunter, who struck at once for the mountains.

It was a long, hard ride, but the horses stood it well, and shortly after nightfall the strange guide made known that they were near the retreat of the Jayhawkers.

"I have flanked their position, sir, and we can ride into their camps ere they know of our presence," announced the guide.

In half an hour more a number of camp-fires came in sight, and around them were groups of men standing in supposed security.

"Put a line of men here in a semicircle and let the remainder charge—this is the only position that they can escape from, as a high cliff, overhanging a river, is beyond them."

The suggestion of the guide was at once carried out, and the next moment, with a wild cheer, the troopers charged upon the camp.

The fight was short and sanguinary, and ended by the capture of all the Jayhawkers who were not killed, while the loss to the soldiers was slight.

Rejoiced at his success, the lieutenant encamped upon the field, and the troopers made merry over the spoils found in the Jayhawkers' camp.

At an early hour the squadron, with its wounded prisoners and spoils, started upon their return to the fort; but the guide was not with them, for, after the combat, he had disappeared most mysteriously, none knowing whither he went; but, through his aid the frontier had been rid of a wild set of desperadoes, and Lieutenant Bolton felt that he had won a name for himself, and—promotion.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

A FAMILY SURPRISE.

WHEN the victorious troopers returned to the fort, three days after leaving it, they found that two more graves had been made in the little burying-ground in the *motte*—the graves of Ida Vincent and Captain Graham.

And by a strange coincidence the two had been placed side by side in death—those two so divided in life, and yet bearing the relationship to each other of man and wife.

After Lieutenant Bolton had made his report to Colonel Decatur, been complimented for the service he had done, and recommended for promotion, the baron entered the room of the commandant, who welcomed him most warmly.

"Colonel Decatur, if you will summon your daughter and Lulu, I will make a revelation to you, sir," said the baron, quietly.

With some surprise Colonel Decatur did as he was requested, and the baron said:

"Nearly two years ago, I believe, colonel, you commanded upon the Rio Grande frontier, where you were wont to have frequent brushes with the Mexican guerrilla chief, Cortinas?"

"You are right, sir."

"When ordered from that country to take command here, you started with your daughter, your nephew, Lieutenant Henry Decatur, and an escort, besides your ambulance and servants; am I right?"

"You are."

"Well, when in a lonely part of the country, near a chaparral, you were fired upon and your nephew killed; also you would have lost your life, and all, but for the interference of a young officer, the captain of the Mexican band that attacked you."

"You are right; I owe all to that young officer; but how knew you of this?" demanded Colonel Decatur, in surprise.

"First allow me to ask you some questions, and pardon me if they touch upon the buried past and wound you."

"Go on, baron."

"You were married, now some twenty-seven years ago, to a Mexican maiden of rank and wealth?"

"I was."

"Before a year of wedded life had passed, the Mexicans became very bitter toward Americans; your wife's brother quarreled with you, and the result was a duel in which he fell by your hand, and you were forced to fly from Mexico, leaving your wife behind."

Helen looked both surprised and pained. She had never known that her father had been twice married, nor of this act of his past life, though she knew that he had once spent some time in Mexico.

"Are you aware what became of your wife?"

"Yes; she died in giving birth to a child."

"Do you know whether the child lived?"

"I was told that it did not," said the colonel, sadly.

"You were deceived; the child did live, grew to manhood, and became an officer of the Mexican army, and only learned two years ago, from an old diary found among his mother's papers, who his father was."

"By what he at first considered an unfortunate, but afterward a fortunate circumstance, he was ordered to duty with Cortinas, and thereby I was enabled to save the life of my father—the honor of my sister—for I am that officer!"

Words cannot portray the scene that followed, and the son and brother was taken to the heart of a father and sister.

"You remember the star I gave you, Helen—one side having a circle of diamonds, the other a circle of rubies?" asked the young man, after the greeting was over.

"Yes, I have it here," and Helen quickly brought it forth.

"See here. My mother had my father's likeness put in here, beneath the rubies—her own beneath the diamonds," and touching the star in a peculiar way, the miniatures were revealed—one the face of a handsome young man in the uniform of an American officer—the other the face of a beautiful, dark-eyed, dark-haired maiden of eighteen.

"But, how is it about the letter, Henrique, introducing you as Baron Saville?" asked the colonel.

"I will tell you: my name is Ivan Martino, for I took the name of my mother, that of Decatur not being popular in Mexico. On the Rio Grande I met Baron Henrique Saville, a French noble, with whom I became quite well acquainted.

"After meeting you and Helen in the chaparrals that time, I determined to give up the brigandish life of a Mexican soldier on the Rio Grande, and fearing you would not receive me as one of Cortina's men, I determined to seek you in disguise, and knowing that Saville sailed for China and India, and would not be heard of for some time, I determined to take his name, and well knowing the American officers on the Rio Grande, I wrote that letter of introduction—for which deceit I hope both my father and sister will forgive me. If I sinned it was to know and be loved by them."

"I am only too glad to have found you, my son, and now that I have my two children I am the happiest of men."

"Yes, and I now can understand how it is that Baron Saville is such a fine frontiersman; but, does Dennis know who you are?" asked Lulu.

"Oh, yes; I captured him some years ago—saved his life, and ever since he has been my devoted friend.

"But it was hard work for him to metamorphose me into a baron from Captain Ivan Martino; and all the trail here, from Texas, I had him practicing, calling me *Masther Henrique*," laughed the young Mexican; "but, there is Dennis calling me now. What is it, Dennis?" he called out from the window.

"Here is a gentleman as says he's after wantin' ter say yer, sur; he says he's ther skoot that wint with yer afther the jayhawkers."

"Tell him to come in here, Dennis," ordered Colonel Decatur, then he added: "I have a great desire to see and thank that man, after all he has done for the frontier."

The next minute Dennis ushered into the room the strange hunter.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

A RESURRECTION.

WHEN the strange hunter entered the room he greeted Ivan Decatur, as I must now call him, in a most friendly manner, and then bowed low to the others.

"Sir, I am glad to meet you, and I desire most heartily to thank you for the service you have rendered the border," said Colonel Decatur, advancing toward the stranger.

"Colonel Decatur," said the visitor, in deep, yet musical tones, "as there is now no longer need for this disguise, permit me to unmask!"

A quick movement of the hand, and the wig of long blonde hair and the beard were removed, and there stood before them *Death-Trailer*, the *Fort Scout*!

"Great God! has the grave yielded up its dead?" cried Colonel Decatur, starting back, while Lulu, Helen and Ivan Decatur pressed nearer, a strange look upon their faces.

"No, colonel, the grave never held me, as doubtless Miss Decatur can tell you.

"To be frank with you, until one minute before the platoon fired upon me I believed I was to die—then Dennis whispered to me:

"There's not the devil of a bullet in any gun; but, fall whin they shoot, an' I'll say to it that yer coom out all right—it's Miss Hilen's orders."

"Of course I obeyed, and the platoon moved away, leaving Dennis and Trapper Dan to bury me; but they buried an empty coffin, while I, mounted on a fine horse, and with arms that your noble daughter procured for me, rode away from the spot where I so nearly lost my life.

"Once free I determined upon two things—to find what had become of the baron, and to hunt down Ned Doyle's band of jayhawkers. In the latter I succeeded, I am happy to say, while I now see what has become of the baron.

"Through the fair correspondent I had in the fort, and from whom I heard every two weeks, by the kindness of Trapper Dan and Dennis, I know all that has happened of late, and now open my arms to take my darling daughter to my heart."

With a happy cry Lulu sprung forward and nestled on her father's broad breast, while Colonel Decatur said, in a voice slightly tremulous:

"God knows, Radcliffe, I am happy as it is, for many hours of sorrow have I had, believing you dead; but to think what sly scamps I had under my own roof! I thought both Helen and Lulu took your death wonderfully cool; and, that confounded Irishman was in the secret, too!

"Well, God bless you all," and Colonel Decatur turned to leave the room.

"Hold on, colonel! I have something else to say, that I may not appear to have acted wickedly.

"When I left my poor wife (and God forgive me for doing it), I knew not she had a brother; I turned my income, not a large one, it is true, over to her, placing it in the hands, I believed, of an honest man. But I found out in some other matters he was deceiving me, and to hide his crime of not paying my wife the quarterly income, he told me she was dead, and that he had not told me for fear it would grieve me so deeply. Strange to say, I believed the rascal, and mourned my wife as dead, until letters, brought me by Trapper Dan, from Miss Helen and Lulu, told me all.

"Now let me clear up another mystery. When I first met the baron here, he was accused of the murder of a man, by whose side he was found by a party of jayhawkers. The name of that man was Bill Berkely—so his comrades called him; but that was not his real name; he was the brother of my poor wife!

"This I found out by the papers I took from him. He fired upon me from an ambush, and missed me; I fired at him and killed him.

"My horse ran off and I went after him, and while gone the baron came up, and there the jayhawkers found him, and fortunately I returned in time to save him; then, by the side of the dead man, I picked up those letters and trinkets. There were two bundles of old letters—one of them from my wife to her poor mother—the others from me to my wife. The trinkets were little presents I had given her.

"Now I can understand how he got them, and why he kept them in the pocket with the letters his sister had written him, and which, in all his wanderings, he had clung to as the only anchor that had connected him with the past."

A week after the return of *Death-Trailer*, the *Fort Scout*, to his old familiar haunts, eight persons bade farewell forever to Fort Helen, and many were the God-speeds and blessings that followed them on their way from all the denizens of that far frontier post.

Those eight were, Colonel Decatur and the two English lawyers—delighted at last in having found the heir to Castle Glyndon; the heir himself and his daughter, Lulu; Ivan and Helen Decatur; and Dennis Machone.

This party were on their way to England, and upon their arrival there, Castle Glyndon threw wide open its doors to receive them.

And there, in that grand old home, Helen became Lady Radcliffe, and Ivan Decatur claimed as his bride Lulu, once known as the *Fort Scout's* Ward.

THE END.



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